THE

# BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD

A POEM BY KALIDASA

**Translated from the Sanskrit into English Verse**

BY


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# PREFACE

Of the history of Kalidasa, to whom by general assent the Kumara Sambhava, or Birth of the War-God, is attributed, we know but little with any certainty; we can only gather from a memorial-verse which enumerates their names, that he was one of the 'Nine Precious Stones' that shone at the Court of Vikramaditya, King of Oujein, in the half-century immediately preceding the Christian era. As the examination of arguments for and against the correctness of this date is not likely to interest general readers, I must request them to rest satisfied with the belief that about the time when Virgil and Horace were shedding an undying lustre upon the reign of Augustus, our poet Kalidasa lived, loved, and sang, giving and taking honour, at the polished court of the no less munificent patron of Sanskrit literature, at the period of its highest perfection.

Little as we know of Indian poetry, here and there

an English reader may be found, who is not entirely unacquainted with the name or works of the author of the beautiful dramas of SAKONTALA and THE HERO AND THE NYMPH, the former of which has long enjoyed an European celebrity in the translation of SIR WILLIAM JONES, and the latter is one of the most charming of PROFESSOR WILSON'S specimens of the Hindu Theatre ; here and there even in England may be found a lover of the graceful, tender, picturesque, and fanciful, who knows something, and would gladly know more, of the sweet poet of the CLOUD MESSENGER, and THE SEASONS; whilst in Germany, he has been deeply studied in the original, and enthusiastically admired in translation,—not the Orientalist merely, but the poet, the critic, the natural philosopher,—a GOETHE, a SCHLEGEL, a HUMBOLDT, having agreed, on account of his tenderness of feeling and his rich creative imagination, to set KALIDASA very high among the glorious company of the Sons of Song.*

That the Poem which is now for the first time

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* Goethe says :

Willst du die Bluthe des fruhen, die Fruchte des spateren Jahres,
Willst du was reizt und entzuckt, willst du was sattigt und nahrt,
Willst du den Himmel, die Erde, mit einem Namen begreifen ;
Nenn' ich Sakontala, Dich, und so ist Alles gesagt.

See also Schlegel's Dramatic Literature, Lect. II, and Humboldt's Kosmos, Vol. II, p. 40, and note.

offered to the general reader, in an English dress, will not diminish this reputation is the translator's earnest hope, yet my admiration of the grace and beauty that pervade so much of the work must not allow me to deny that occasionally, even in the noble Sanskrit, if we judge him by an European standard, KALIDASA is bald and prosaic. Nor is this a defence of the Translator at the expense of the Poet—fully am I conscious how far I am from being able adequately to reproduce the fanciful creation of the sweet singer of OUJEIN; that numerous beauties of thought and expression I may have past by, mistaken, marred; that in many of the more elaborate descriptions, my own versification is 'harsh as the jarring of a tuneless chord' compared with the melody of KALIDASA's rhythm, to rival whose sweetness and purity of language, so admirably adapted to the soft repose and celestial, rosy hue of his pictures, would have tried all the fertility of resource, the artistic skill, and the exquisite ear of the author of LALLA ROOKH himself. I do not think this Poem deserves, and I am sure it will not obtain, that admiration which the Author's masterpieces already made known at once commanded; at all events, if the work itself is not inferior, it has not enjoyed the good fortune of having a JONES or WILSON for Translator.

It may be as well to inform the reader, before he wonder at the mis-nomer, that the BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD was either left unfinished by its author, or time has robbed us of the conclusion; the latter is the more probable supposition, tradition informing us that the poem originally consisted of twenty-two cantos, of which only seven now remain.

I have derived great assistance in the work of translation from the Calcutta printed edition of the poem in the Library of the East-India House; but although the Sanskrit commentaries accompanying the text are sometimes of the greatest use in unravelling the author's meaning, they can scarcely claim infallibility; and, not unfrequently, are so matter-of-fact and prosaic, that I have not scrupled to think, or rather to feel, for myself. It is, however, PROFESSOR STENZLER'S edition, published under the auspices of the Oriental Translation Fund (a society that has liberally encouraged my own undertaking), that I have chiefly used; valuable as this work is (and I will not disown my great obligations to it), it is much to be regretted that the extracts from the native commentators are so scanty, and the annotations so few and brief.

And now, one word as to the manner in which I have endeavoured to perform my task:—though

there is much, I think, that might be struck out, to the advantage of the poem, this I have in no instance ventured to do, my aim having been to give the English reader as faithful a cast of the original as my own power and the nature of things would permit, and, without attempting to give word for word or line for line, to produce upon the imagination impressions similar to those which one who studies the work in Sanskrit would experience.

I will not seek to anticipate the critics, nor to deprecate their animadversions, by pointing out the beauties of the Poet, or particularizing the defects of him and his Translator; that the former will be appreciated, and the latter kindly dealt with, late experience makes me confident; so that now, in the words of the Manager in the Prelude to the HERO AND THE NYMPH, "I have only to request the audience that they will listen to this work of KALIDASA with attention and kindness, in consideration of its subject and respect for the Author."

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*Marlborough College, April, 1853*

# THE BIRTH OF THE WAR-GOD

## Canto First

### UMA'S NATIVITY

FAR in the north, HIMALAYA lifting high
His towery summits till they cleave the sky,
Spans the wide land from east to western sea,
Lord of the Hills, instinct with Deity.
For him, when PRITHU ruled in days of old
The rich Earth, teeming with her gems and gold,
The vassal Hills, and MERU drained her breast,
And decked HIMALAYA, for they loved him best,
While Earth, the mother, gave her store to fill
With herbs and sparkling ores the royal Hill.
Proud Mountain-king! his diadem of snow
Dims not the beauty of his gems below;
For who can gaze upon the Moon, and dare
To mark *one* spot less brightly glorious there?—
Who, mid a thousand virtues, dares to blame
*One* shade of weakness in a hero's fame?

Oft, when the gleamings of his mountain brass
Flash through the clouds and tint them as they pass,
Those glories mock the hues of closing day,
And Heaven's bright wantons hail their hour of play ;
Try, ere the time, the magic of their glance,
And deck their beauty for the twilight dance.
Far spread the wilds where eager hunters roam,
Tracking the lion to his dreary home ;
For though the melting snow has washed away
The crimson blood-drops of the wounded prey,
Still the fair pearls that graced his forehead tell
Where the strong elephant, o'ermastered, fell,—
Cling to the lion's talons, and betray,
Falling at every step, the mighty conqueror's way.
Dear to the Sylphs are the cool shadows thrown
By dark clouds wandering round the mountain's zone,
Till the big rain-drops fright them from the plains
To those high peaks where sunshine ever reigns.
There birch-trees wave, that lend their friendly aid
To tell the passion of the love-born maid,
So quick to learn with metal tints to mark
Her hopes and fears upon the tender bark.

List ! breathing from each cave, HIMALAYA leads
The glorious hymn with all his whispering reeds;
Till Heavenly Minstrels raise their voice in song
And swell his music as it floats along.
Where the fierce elephant wounds the scented bough
To ease the torment of his burning brow,
The bleeding pines their odorous gum distil,
And breathe rare fragrance o'er the sacred hill.

There magic herbs that pour their streaming light
From mossy caverns through the darksome night,
Lend a bright torch to guide the trembling maid
Where waits her lover in the leafy shade.
Yet hath he caves within whose inmost cells
In tranquil rest the murky Darkness dwells,
And, like the night-bird, spreads the brooding wing
Safe in the shelter of the Mountain-king,
Unscorned, uninjured—for the good and great
Spurn not the suppliant for his lowly state.

Why lingers yet the Heavenly Minstrel's bride
On the wild path that skirts HIMALAYA'S side?—
Cold to her tender feet—oh, cold—the snow,
Why are her steps—her homeward steps—so slow?
'Tis that her slender ancles scarce can bear
The weight of beauty that impedes her there;
Each rounded limb, and all her peerless charms,
That broad full bosom, those voluptuous arms.
E'en the wild kine that roam his forests bring
The royal symbols to the Mountain-king,—
With tails outspread, their bushy streaming hair
Flashes like moonlight through the parted air;
What monarch's fan more glorious might there be,
More meet to wave before such majesty?
There, when the Nymphs, within the cave's recess,
In modest fear their gentle limbs undress,
Descending clouds hang fondly round to shade
The blushing beauties of each mountain maid.
With pearly dew-drops GANGA loads the gale,
That waves the dark pines towering o'er the vale,

And breathes in welcome freshness o'er the face
Of wearied hunters when they quit the chase.
Spread on the tranquil pool so sweetly sleep
The Lotus-flowers upon Himalaya's steep,
That the bright Seven who star the northern sky
Cull each a blossom from their seats on high ;
And when the Sun pours forth his morning glow
In streams of glory from his path below,
They gain new beauty as his kisses break
His darlings' slumber on the mountain lake.

Well might that ancient Hill by merit claim
The power and glory of a monarch's name—
Nurse of pure herbs that grace each holy rite,
Earth's meetest bearer of unyielding might ;
The Lord of Life for this ordained him king,
And bade him share the sacred offering.
Gladly obedient to the law divine,
He chose a consort to prolong his line ;
No child of earth, born of the Sages' will,
The fair nymph Mena pleased the sovran Hill ;
To her he sued, nor was his prayer denied,
The Saints' beloved was the Mountain's bride ;
Crowned with all bliss and beauty were the pair,
He passing glorious, she was heavenly fair ;
Swiftly the seasons, winged with love, flew on,
And made her mother of a noble son—
The great Mainaka, who in triumph led
His Serpent beauties to the bridal bed ;
And once when Indra's might those pinions rent
That bare the swift Hills through the firmament,

(So fierce his rage, no Mountian could withstand
The wild bolt flashing from his red right hand,)
He fled to Ocean, powerful to save,
And hid his glory 'neath the friendly wave.

A gentle daughter came at length to bless
The lady mother with her loveliness—
Born once again, for in an earlier life
High fame was hers, as SIVA'S faithful wife;
But her proud sire had dared the God to scorn,
Then was her tender soul with anguish torn,
And jealous for the Lord she loved so well
Her angered spirit left its mortal cell.
Now did the maid, a lovely blessing, spring
From that pure lady and the Mountain-king.—
When Industry and virtue meet and kiss,
Holy their union, and the fruit is bliss.
Blest was that hour, and all the world was gay,
When MENA'S daughter saw the light of day—
A rosy glow filled all the brightening sky,
An odorous breeze came sweeping softly by,
Breathed round the hill a sweet unearthly strain,
And the glad heavens poured down their flowery rain.
That fair young maiden diademmed with light
Made her dear mother's fame more sparkling bright,
As the blue offspring of the Turquoise Hills
The parent Mount with richer glory fills,
When the Cloud's voice has caused the gem to spring,
Responsive to its gentle thundering.
Then was it sweet, as days flew by, to trace
The dawning charm of every infant grace,

Even as the crescent Moons their glory pour
More full, more lovely than the eve before.

As yet the maiden was unknown to fame,
And Mountain-lady was her only name;
But when her mother, filled with anxious care
At her stern penance, cried Forbear! Forbear!
To a new title was the warning turned,
And UMA was the name the maiden earned.
Loveliest was she of all his lovely race,
And dearest to her father;—on her face
Looking with love he ne'er could satisfy
The thirsty glances of a parent's eye;
When spring-tide bids a thousand flowerets bloom
Loading the breezes with their rich perfume,
Though here and there the wandering bee may rest,
He loves his own—his darling Mango—best.
The Gods' bright river bathes with gold the skies,
And pure sweet eloquence adorns the wise;
The flambeau's glory is the shining fire.—
She was the pride, the glory of her sire,
Shedding new lustre on his old descent,
His loveliest child, his richest ornament.
The sparkling GANGA laved her heavenly home,
And o'er her islets would the maiden roam
Amid the dear companions of her play
With ball and doll to while the hours away.
As swans in autumn in assembling bands
Fly back to GANGA's well-remembered sands:
As herbs beneath the darksome shades of night
Collect again their scattered rays of light:

So dawned upon the maiden's waking mind
The far-off memory of her life resigned,
And all her former learning in its train,
Feelings, and thoughts, and knowledge came again.
Now beauty's prime, that craves from art no aid,
Ripened the loveliness of that young maid—
That scorns the wine-cup's help to fire the heart,
The bow of Love without his flowery dart;
There was a glory beaming from her face,
With love's own light, and every youthful grace:
Ne'er pictured lily more divinely fair
Unclosed her beauty to the morning air.
Bright as a Lotus, springing where she trod,
Her glowing feet shed radiance o'er the sod:
That arching neck, the step, the glance aside,
The proud swans taught her as they stemmed the tide,
Whilst of the maiden they would fondly learn
Her anclets' pleasant music in return.
When the Almighty Maker first began
The marvellous beauty of that child to plan,
In full fair symmetry each rounded limb
Grew neatly fashioned and approved by Him:
The rest was faultless, for the Artist's care
Formed each young charm most excellently fair,
As if his moulding hand would fain express
The visible type of perfect loveliness.

What thing of beauty may the poet dare
With the smooth wonder of those limbs compare?
The young tree springing by the brooklet's side—
The rounded trunk, the forest-monarch's pride?
O no!—too cold, too chilling cold, the tree,—
*This*, too unyielding for such rivalry.

Her hidden beauties though no tongue may tell,
Yet SIVA'S love will aid the fancy well;
No other maid could deem her boasted charms
Worthy the clasp of such a husband's arms.

Between the partings of fair UMA'S vest
Came hasty glimpses of a lovely breast:
So closely there the kissing hillocks rose,
Scarce could the Lotus in the vale repose;
And if her loosened zone e'er slipped below,
All was so bright beneath the mantle's flow,
So dazzling bright, as if the maid had braced
A band of gems to sparkle round her waist;
While the dear dimples of her downy skin
Seemed fitting couch for love to revel in.

Her arms were softer than the flowery dart,
Young KAMA'S arrow, that subdues the heart;
For vain his strife with SIVA, till at last
He chose those chains to bind his conqueror fast.

E'en the new Moon poured down a paler beam
When her long fingers flashed their rosy gleam,
And brighter than Asoka's rich leaves threw
A glory round, like summer's evening hue.

The strings of pearl across her bosom thrown
Increased its beauty, and enhanced their own,—
Her breast, her jewels seeming to agree,
The adorner now, and now the adorned to be.

When BEAUTY gazes on the fair full Moon,
No Lotus charms her, for it blooms at noon:
If on that flower she feed her raptured eye,
No Moon is shining from the mid-day sky;
She looked on UMA'S face, more heavenly fair,
And found their glories both united there,

The loveliest flower that ever opened yet
Laid in the fairest branch—a pearl that's set
In richest coral—with her smile might vie
Flashing through lips bright with their rosy dye.
And when she spoke—upon the maiden's tongue
Distilling nectar, such rare accents hung,
The sweetest note that e'er the Köil poured
Seemed harsh and tuneless as a jarring chord.
The melting glance of that soft liquid eye,
Tremulous like lilies when the breezes sigh,
Which learnt it first—so winning and so mild—
The gentle fawn, or MENA'S gentler child ?
And oh, the arching of her brow ! so fine
Was the rare beauty of its pencilled line—
LOVE gazed upon her forehead in despair
And spurned the bow he once esteemed so fair :
Her long bright tresses too might shame the pride
Of envious antelopes on the mountain-side.
Surely the Maker's care had been to cull
From all that's lovely the most beautiful,
As if the world's Creator would behold
All beauty centred in a single mould.

When holy NARAD—Saint who roams at will—
First saw the daughter of the royal Hill,
He hailed the bride whom SIVA'S love should own
Half of himself, and partner of his throne ;
HIMALAYA listened, and the father's pride
Would yield the maiden for no other's bride ;
To Fire alone of all bright things we raise
The holy hymn, the sacrifice of praise :

But still the Monarch durst not, could not bring
His child, unsought, to Heaven's supremest King;
But as a good man fears his earnest prayer
Should rise unheeded, and with thoughtful care
Seeks for some friend his eager suit to aid--
Thus great HIMALAYA in his awe delayed.

Since the sad moment when his gentle bride
In the full glory of her beauty died,
The mournful SIVA in the holy grove
Had dwelt in solitude, and known not love:
High on that hill where musky breezes throw
Their balmy odours o'er eternal snow,
Where Heavenly Minstrels pour their notes divine
And rippling GANGA laves the mountain pine,
Clad in a coat of skin all rudely wrought
He lived for prayer and solitary thought;
The faithful band that served the Hermit's will
Lay in the hollows of the rocky hill,
Where from the clefts the dark bitumen flowed;
Tinted with mineral dyes their bodies glowed,
Their garb, rude mantles of the birch-tree's rind,
With bright red garlands was their hair entwined;
The holy Bull before his master's feet
Shook the hard-frozen earth with echoing feet,
And as he heard the lion's roaring swell
In distant thunder from the rocky dell,
In angry pride he raised his voice of fear
And from the mountain drove the startled deer.

Bright fire—a shape the God would sometimes wear
Who takes eight various forms—was glowing there;

Then the great Deity who gives the prize
Of penance, prayer, and holy exercise,
As though to earn the meed he grants to man,
Himself the penance and the pain began.

Now to that holy Lord, to whom is given
Honour and glory by the Gods in Heaven,
The worship of a gift HIMALAYA paid,
And towards his dwelling sent the lovely maid;
Her task, attended by her youthful train,
To woo his widowed heart to love again.

The Hermit welcomed with a courteous brow
That gentle enemy of hermit vow—
The still pure breast where Contemplation dwells
Defies the charmer and the charmer's spells—
Calm and unmoved he viewed the wondrous maid,
And bade her all his pious duties aid;
She culled fresh blossoms at the God's command,
Sweeping the altar with a careful hand,
The holy grass for sacred rites she sought,
And day by day the fairest water brought;
And if the unwonted labour caused a sigh,
The fair-haired lady turned her languid eye
Where the pale Moon on SIVA'S forehead gleamed,
And swift through all her frame returning vigour streamed.

## Canto Second

### THE ADDRESS TO BRAHMA

WHILE impious TARAK in resistless might
Was troubling Heaven and Earth with wild affright,
To BRAHMA'S high abode, by INDRA led,
The mournful Deities for refuge fled ;
As when the Day-God's loving beams awake
The Lotus slumbering on the silver lake,
So BRAHMA deigned his glorious face to show,
And poured sweet comfort on their looks of woe.
Then nearer came the suppliant Gods to pay
Honour to him whose face turns every way :
They bowed them low before the Lord of Speech,
And sought with truthful words his heart to reach :—
" Glory to Thee ! before the world was made,
One single form thy Majesty displayed—
Next Thou, to body forth the mystic Three,
Didst fill three Persons—Glory, Lord, to Thee !
Unborn and unbegotten ! from thy hand
The fruitful seed rained down ; at thy command
From that small germ o'er quickening waters flung
All things that move, and all that move not, sprung ;

Before thy triple form they wondering bow,
Maker, preserver, and destroyer, Thou!

Thou, when a longing urged thee to create,
Thy single form in twain didst separate;
The Sire, the Mother that made all things be
By their first union were but parts of Thee;
From them the life that fills this earthly frame,
And fruitful Nature, self-renewing, came.

Thou countest not thy time by mortals' light,
With Thee there is but one vast day and night;
When BRAHMA slumbers fainting Nature dies,
When BRAHMA wakens all again arise.

Creater of the world—Thou uncreate!
Endless! all things from Thee their end await;
Before the world wast Thou!—each Lord shall fall
Before Thee, mightiest, highest, Lord of all;
Thy self-taught soul thine own deep spirit knows,
Made by thyself thy mighty form arose;
Into the same, when all things have their end,
Shall thy great self, absorbed in Thee, descend;
Lord, who may hope thy essence to declare?
Firm, yet as subtile as the yielding air—
Fixt, all-pervading; ponderous, yet light,
Patent to all, yet hidden from the sight.

Thine are the sacred hymns which mortals raise,
Commencing ever with the word of praise,
With three-toned chant to grace the sacrifice,
And lead the worshipper to Paradise;
They hail Thee Nature labouring to free
The immortal Soul from low humanity—
Hail Thee the stranger Spirit, unimpressed,
Gazing on Nature from thy lofty rest.

Father of fathers, God of gods art thou,
Creator, highest, hearer of the vow !
Thou art the sacrifice, and Thou the priest,
Thou, he that eateth—Thou, the holy feast ;
Thou art the knowledge which by Thee is taught,
The mighty thinker, and the highest thought ! "

Pleased with their truthful praise, his favouring eye
He turned upon the Dwellers in the Sky,
While from four mouths his words in gentle flow
Come welling softly to assuage their woe :--
" Welcome ! glad welcome, princes ! ye who hold
Your lofty sovereignties ordained of old—
But why so mournful ? what has dimmed your light ?
Why shine your faces less divinely bright ?
Like stars that pour forth weaker, paler gleams,
When the fair Moon with brighter radiance beams.
O say, in vain doth mighty INDRA bear
The thunderbolt of Heaven, unused to spare ?
VRITRA, the furious fiend, 'twas strong to slay,
Why dull and blunted are its darts to-day ?
See, VARUN's noose hangs idly on his arm,
Like some fell serpent quelled by magic charm ;
Weak is KUVERA's hand—his arm no more
Wields the dread mace it once so proudly bore ;
But like a tree whose boughs are lopped away,
It tells of piercing woe, and dire dismay.
In days of yore how YAMA's sceptre shone !
Fled are its glories, all its terrors gone ;
Despised and useless as a quenched brand
All idly now it marks the yielding sand.

Fallen are the Lords of Light, ere now the gaze
Shrank from the coming of their fearful blaze;
So changed are they, the undazzled eye may see
Like pictured forms, each rayless Deity.
Some baffling power has curbed the breezes' swell,
Vainly they chafe against the secret spell—
We know some barrier checks their wonted course,
When refluent waters seek again their source;
The RUDRAS too—fierce demigods who bear
The curved Moon hanging from their twisted hair—
Tell by their looks of fear, and shame, and woe,
Of threats now silenced, of a mightier foe.
Glory and power, ye Gods, were yours of right,—
Have ye now yielded to some stronger might?
Even as on earth a general law may be
Made powerless by a special text's decree?
Then say, my sons, why seek ye BRAHMA's throne?
'Tis mine to frame the worlds—'tis yours to guard your own."

Then INDRA turned his thousand glorious eyes,
Glancing like lilies when the soft wind sighs,
And in the Gods' behalf, their mighty Chief
Urged the Most Eloquent to tell their grief.
Then rose the Heavenly Teacher, by whose side
Dim seemed the glories of the Thousand-eyed,
And with his hands outspread, to BRAHMA spake,
Couched on his own dear flower, the daughter of the lake:—
"O mighty Being! surely thou dost know
The unceasing fury of our ruthless foe;
For thou dost see the secret thoughts that lie
Deep in the heart, yet open to thine eye;

The vengeful TARAK, in resistless might,
Like some dire Comet, gleaming wild affright,
O'er all the Worlds an evil influence sheds,
And, in thy favour strong, destruction spreads.
All bow before him ;—on his palace wall
The Sun's first ray and parting splendour fall ;
Ne'er could he waken with a lovelier glance
His own dear Lotus from her nightly trance ;
For him, proud Fiend, the Moon no waning knows,
But with unminished full-orbed lustre glows.
He would not brook its crescent glory set
Amid the blaze of SIVA'S coronet.

How fair his garden, where the obedient breeze
Dares steal no blossom from the slumbering trees !
The wild wind checks his blustering pinions there,
And gently whispering, fans the balmy air ;
While through the inverted year the Seasons pour,
To win the Demon's grace, their flowery store.

For him, the River-god beneath the stream,
Marks the young pearl increase its silver gleam,
Until, its beauty and its growth complete,
He bears the offering to his master's feet.
The Serpents, led by VASUKI, their king,
Across his nightly path their lustre fling ;
Bright as a torch, their flashing jewels blaze,
Nor wind, nor rain, can dim their dazzling rays.

E'en INDRA, sovereign of the blissful skies,
To gain his love by flattering homage tries,
And sends him oft those flowers of wondrous hue
That on the Heavenly Tree in beauty grew ;
Yet all these offerings brought from day to day—
This flattery—fail his ruthless hand to stay ;

Earth, Hell, and Heaven, beneath his rage must groan,
Till force can hurl him from his evil throne.
  Alas ! where glowed the bright celestial bowers,
And gentle Fair Ones nursed the opening flowers,—
Where heavenly trees a heavenly odour shed,
O'er a sad desert ruin reigns instead.
  He roots up MERU's sacred peaks, where stray
The fiery coursers of the God of Day,
To form bright slopes, and glittering mounds of ease,
In the broad gardens of his palaces.
  There, on his couch, the mighty Lord is fanned
Into sweet slumber by a heavenly band—
Poor captive Nymphs, who stand in anguish by,
Drop the big tear, and heave the ceaseless sigh.
  And now have INDRA's elephants defiled
The sparkling stream where heavenly GANGA smiled,
And her gold Lotuses the Fiend has taken
To deck his pools, and left her all forsaken.
  The Gods of Heaven no more delight to roam
O'er all the world, far from their glorious home;
They dread the Demon's impious might, nor dare
Speed their bright chariots through the fields of air ;
And when our worshippers in duty bring
The appointed victims for the offering,
He tears them from the flame with magic art,
While we all powerless watch with drooping heart.
  He too has stolen from his master's side
The Steed of heavenly race, great INDRA's pride :
No more our hosts, so glorious once, withstand
The fierce dominion of the Demon's hand,
As herbs of healing virtue fail to tame
The sickness raging through the infected frame.

Idly the chakra hangs on VISHNU's neck,
And our last hope is vain, that it would check
The haughty TARAK's might, and flash afar
Ruin and death—the thunderbolt of war;
E'en INDRA's elephant has felt the might
Of his fierce monsters in the deadly fight;
Which spurn the dust in fury, and defy
The threatening clouds that sail along the sky.
Therefore, O Lord, we seek a Chief, that he
May lead the hosts of Heaven to victory,—
Even as holy men who long to sever
The immortal spirit from its shell for ever,
Seek lovely Virtue's aid to free the soul
From earthly ties and action's base control.
Thus shall he save us—proudly will we go
Under his escort 'gainst the furious foe;
And INDRA, conqueror in turn, shall bring
FORTUNE, dear captive, home with joy and triumphing."

Sweet as the rains—the fresh'ning rains—that pour
On the parched earth when thunders cease to roar,
Were BRAHMA's words:—"Gods, I have heard your grief,
Wait ye in patience—time will bring relief;
'Tis not for me, my children, to create
A chief to save you from your mournful fate;
Not by my hand the Fiend must be destroyed,
For my kind favour has he once enjoyed,
And well ye know that e'en a poisonous tree
By him who planted it unharmed should be;
He sought it eagerly, and long ago
I gave my favour to your Demon-foe,

And stayed his awful penance, that had hurled
Flames, death, and ruin o'er the subject World.
When that great warrior battles for his life,
O, who may conquer in the deadly strife,
Save one of SIVA's seed? He is the Light,
Reigning supreme beyond the depths of night;
Nor I, nor VISHNU, his full power may share,
Lo, where he dwells in solitude and prayer!—
Go, seek the Hermit in the grove alone,
And to the God be UMA's beauty shown;
Perchance, the Mountain-child, with magnet's force,
May turn the iron from its steadfast course,
Bride of the mighty God—for only she
Can bear to Him as Water bears to me;
Then from their love a mighty Child shall rise,
And lead to war the armies of the skies:
Freed by his hand, no more the heavenly Maids
Shall twine their glittering hair in mournful braids."

He spake, and vanished from their wondering sight—
And they sped homeward to their world of light;
But INDRA, still on BRAHMA'S words intent,
To KAMA's dwelling-place his footsteps bent;
Swiftly he came—the yearning of his will
Made INDRA'S lightning course more speedy still;
The LOVE-GOD, armed with flowers divinely sweet,
In lowly homage bowed before his feet,—
Around his neck, where bright love-tokens clung,
Arched like a maiden's brow, his Bow was hung,
And blooming SPRING, his constant follower, bore
The Mango twig, his weapon famed of yore.

# Canto Third

## THE DEATH OF LOVE

In eager gaze the Sovereign of the Skies
Looked full on Kama with his thousand eyes—
E'en such a gaze as trembling suppliants bend,
When danger threatens, on a mighty friend.
Close by his side, where Indra bade him rest,
The Love-God sate, and thus his Lord addressed :
" All-knowing Indra, deign, my prince, to tell
Thy heart's desire in Earth, or Heaven, or Hell :
Double the favour, mighty sovereign, thou
Hast thought on Kama, O, command him now !
Who angers thee by toiling for the prize,
By penance, prayer, or holy sacrifice ?
What mortal being dost thou count thy foe ?
Speak, I will tame him with my darts and bow.
Has some one feared the endless change of birth,
And sought the path that leads the soul from earth ?
Slave to a glancing eye thy foe shall bow,
And own the witchery of a woman's brow ;
E'en though the object of thine envious rage
Were taught high wisdom by the Immortal Sage,

With billowy passions will I whelm his soul,
Like rushing waves that spurn the bank's control.
Or has the ripe full beauty of a spouse,
Too fondly faithful to her bridal vows,
Ravished thy spirit from thee?—thine, all thine
Around thy neck her loving arms shall twine;
Thy dearest, jealous of another's charms,
Spurned thee in wrath when flying to her arms?
I'll rack her yielding bosom with such pain,
Soon shall she be all love and warmth again,
And wildly fly in fevered haste to rest
Her aching heart close, close to thy dear breast.

Lay, INDRA, lay thy threatening bolt aside,
My gentle darts shall tame the haughtiest pride,
And all that war with Heaven and thee shall know
The magic influence of thy KAMA's bow;
For Woman's curling lip shall bow them down,
Fainting in terror at her threatening frown.
Flowers are my arms, mine only warrior SPRING,
Yet in thy favour am I strong, great King;
What can their strength who draw the bow avail
Against my matchless power when I assail?
Strong is the Trident-bearing God, yet he,
The mighty SIVA, e'en, must yield to me."

Then INDRA answered with a dawning smile,—
Resting his foot upon a stool the while:—
"Dear God of Love, thou truly hast displayed
The power unrivalled of thy promised aid;
My hope is all in thee—my weapons are
The thunderbolt, and thou more mighty far—

But vain, all vain the bolt of Heaven to fright
Those holy Saints whom Penance aims aright
Thy power knows no bound—thou, only thou,
All-conquering Deity, canst help me now!
Full well I know thy nature, and assign
This toil to thee, which needs a strength like thine:
As on that Snake alone will KRISHNA rest,
That bears the Earth upon his haughty crest.

Our task is well-nigh done—thy boasted dart
Has power to conquer even SIVA's heart;
Hear what the Gods, oppressed with woe, would fain
From mighty SIVA through thine aid obtain;
He may beget—and none in Heaven but he—
A chief to lead our hosts to victory;
But all his mind with holiest lore is fraught;
Bent on the Godhead is his every thought;
Thy darts, O LOVE, alone can reach him now,
And lure his spirit from the hermit vow.
Go, seek HIMALAYA'S Mountain-child, and aid
With all thy loveliest charms the lovely Maid,
So may she please his fancy—only she
May wed with SIVA—such the fixed decree.

E'en now my bands of Heavenly Maids have spied
Fair UMA dwelling by the Hermit's side—
There by her father's bidding rests she still,
Sweet minister, upon the cold bleak hill.
Go, KAMA, go! perform this great emprise,
And free from fear the Rulers of the Skies;
We need thy favour, as the new-sown grain
Calls for the influence of the gentle rain.

Go, KAMA, go ! thy flowery darts shall be
Crowned with success o'er this great Deity;
Yea, and thy task is e'en already done,
For praise and glory are that instant won
When a bold heart dares manfully essay
The deed which others shrink from in dismay.
Gods are thy suppliants, KAMA, and on thee
Depends the triple World's security :
No cruel deed will stain thy flowery bow,
With all thy gentlest, mightiest valour, go !
And now, Disturber of the Spirit, see
SPRING, thy beloved, will thy comrade be,
And gladly aid thee SIVA's heart to tame –
None bids the whispering Wind, and yet he fans the flame."

He spake, and KAMA bowed his bright head down,
And took his bidding like a flowery crown—
Above his wavy curls great INDRA bent,
And fondly touched his soldier ere he went,
With that hard hand—but, O, how gentle now !—
That fell so heavy on his elephant's brow.
Then for that snow-crowned hill he turned away,
Where all alone the heavenly Hermit lay—
His fearful RETI and his comrade SPRING
Followed the guidance of Love's mighty King—
There will he battle in unwonted strife,
Return a conqueror or bereft of life.

How fair was SPRING !—to fill the heart with love,
And lure the Hermit from his thoughts above,
In that pure grove he grew so heavenly bright
That KAMA's envy wakened at the sight.

Now the bright Day-God turned his burning ray
To where KUVERA holds his royal sway,
While the sad South in whispering breezes sighed
And mourned his absence like a tearful bride.

Then from its stem the red Asoka threw
Full buds and flowerets of celestial hue,
Nor waited for the Maiden's touch, the sweet
Beloved pressure of her tinkling feet;
There grew LOVE's arrow, his dear Mango spray,
Winged with young leaves to speed its airy way,
And at the call of SPRING the wild bees came,
Grouping the syllables of KAMA's name.

How sighed the spirit o'er that loveliest flower
That boasts no fragrance to enrich its dower!
For Nature, wisest mother, oft prefers
To part more fairly those good gifts of hers—
There from the tree Palasa blossoms spread,
Curved like the crescent Moon, their rosiest red,
With opening buds that looked as if young SPRING
Had pressed his nails there in his dallying—
Sweet wanton SPRING, to whose enchanting face
His flowery Tilaka gave fairer grace—
Who loves to tint his lip, the Mango spray,
With the fresh colours of the early day,
And powder its fine red with many a bee
That sips the oozing nectar rapturously.

The cool gale speeding o'er the shady lawns
Shook down the sounding leaves, while startled fawns
Ran wildly at the viewless foe, all blind
With pollen wafted by the fragrant wind

Sweet was the Koil's voice—his neck still red
With Mango buds on which he just had fed—

'Twas as the voice of LOVE to bid the dame
Spurn her cold pride, nor quench the gentle flame.
What though the heat has stained the tints that dyed
With marvellous bloom the Heavenly Minstrel's bride?
Neither her smile nor sunny glances fail,
Bright is her lip, although her cheek be pale.
E'en the pure Hermits owned the secret power
Of warm SPRING coming in unwonted hour,
While LOVE's delightful witchery gently stole
With strong sweet influence o'er the saintly soul.

On came the Archer-God, and at his side
The timid RETI, his own darling bride,
While breathing Nature showed how deep it felt
'Neath Passion's glowing touch, the senses melt—
For there in eager love the wild bee dipp'd
In the dark flower-cup where his mistress sipp'd;
There with his horn the goat touched lovingly
His gentle mate, who closed her melting eye;
There from her trunk the elephant had poured
A lily-scented stream to cool her lord,
While the fond love-bird by the silver flood
Gave to his hen the tasted Lotus bud.
Full in his song the Minstrel stayed to sip
The heavenlier nectar of his darling's lip—
Pure pearls of heat had just distained the dye,
But flowery wine was sparkling in her eye.
How the young creeper's beauty charmed the view,
Fair as the fairest maid, as playful too!
Here some bright blossoms, lovelier than the rest,
In full round beauty matched her swelling breast;

Here in a thin bright line, some delicate spray,
Red as her lip, ravished the soul away—
And then how loving, and how close they hung
To the tall trees that fondly o'er them hung!
Bright, heavenly wantons poured the witching strain,
Quiring for SIVA's ear, but all in vain—
No charmer's spell may check the firm control,
Won by the Holy, o'er the impassioned soul.

The Hermit's servant hasted to the door,
In his left hand a branch of gold he bore—
He touched his lip for silence—Peace! be still!
Nor mar the quiet of this holy hill,—
He spake—no dweller of the forest stirred,
No wild bee murmured, hushed was every bird—
Still and unmoved, as in a picture stood
All life that breathed within the waving wood.
As some great Monarch when he goes to war
Shuns the fierce aspect of a baleful star,
So KAMA hid him from the Hermit's eye,
And sought a path that led unnoticed by,
Where tangled flowers and clustering trailers spread
Their grateful canopy o'er SIVA's head.
Bent on his hardy enterprise, with awe
The Three-eyed Lord—great Penitent—he saw:
Where on a mound a tiger's skin was laid,
Sate the stern God beneath a pine-tree's shade.
Absorbed in holiest thought, erect and still,
The Hermit rested on the gentle hill;
His shoulders drooping down—each foot was bent
Beneath the body of the Penitent;

With open palms the hands were firmly pressed,
As though a Lotus lay upon his breast:
A double rosary in each ear—behind
With wreathing serpents were his locks entwined;
His coat of hide shone blacker to the view
Against his neck of brightly beaming blue;
How wild the look, how terrible the frown
Of his dark eyebrows bending sternly down!
How fiercely glared his eyes, unmoving blaze
Fixed in Devotion's meditating gaze!
Calm as a full cloud resting on a hill,
A waveless lake when every breeze is still,
Like a torch burning in a sheltered spot—
So still was He, unmoving, breathing not.
So full the stream of marvellous glory poured
From the bright forehead of that mighty Lord,
Pale seemed the crescent Moon upon his head,
And slenderer than a slender Lotus thread.
At all the body's nine-fold gates of sense
He had barred in the pure Intelligence,
To ponder on the Soul which sages call
Eternal Spirit, highest, over all.

How sad was KAMA at the awful sight,
How failed his courage in a swoon of fright!
As near and nearer to the God he came
Whom wildest thought could never hope to tame,
Unconsciously his hands in fear and woe,
Dropped the sweet arrows and his flowery bow.
But UMA came with all her maiden throng,
And KAMA's fainting heart again was strong;

Bright flowers of Spring, in every lovely hue,
Around the Lady's form rare beauty threw,
Some clasped her neck like strings of purest pearls,
Some shot their glory through her wavy curls.
Bending her graceful head as half-oppressed
With swelling charms even too richly blest,
Fancy might deem that beautiful young maiden
Some slender tree with its sweet flowers o'erladen.
From time to time her gentle hand replaced
The flowery girdle slipping from her waist:
It seemed that LOVE could find no place more fair,
So hung his newest, dearest bowstring there.
A greedy bee kept hovering round to sip
The fragrant nectar of her blooming lip—
She closed her eyes in terror of the thief,
And beat him from her with a Lotus leaf.
The angry curl of RETI's lip confessed
The shade of envy that stole o'er her breast,
Through KAMA's soul fresh hope and courage flew,
As that sweet vision blessed his eager view—
So bright, so fair, so winning soft was she,
Who could not conquer in such company?

Now UMA came, fair Maid, his destined bride,
With timid steps approaching SIVA's side;
In contemplation will he brood no more,
He sees the Godhead, and his task is o'er;
He breathes, he moves, the Earth begins to rock,
The Snake, her bearer, trembling at the shock.
Due homage then his own dear servant paid,
And told him of the coming of the Maid;

He learnt his Master's pleasure by the nod,
And led HIMALAYA's daughter to the God ;
Before his feet her young companions spread
Fresh leaves and blossoms as they bow the head,
While UMA stooped so low, that from her hair
Dropped the bright flower that starred the midnight there ;
To him whose ensign bears the Bull she bent,
Till each spray fell, her ear's rich ornament.
" Sweet Maid," cried SIVA, " surely thou shalt be
Blessed with a husband who loves none but thee ! "
Her fear was banished, and her hope was high,—
A God had spoken, and Gods cannot lie.

Rash as some giddy moth that wooes the flame,
LOVE seized the moment, and prepared to aim,
Close by the daughter of the Mountain-King,
He looked on SIVA, and he eyed his string.
While with her radiant hand fair UMA gave
A rosary, of the Lotuses that lave
Their beauties in the heavenly GANGA's wave,—
And the great Three-Eyed God was fain to take
The offering for the well-loved suppliant's sake,
On his bright bow LOVE placed the unerring dart,
The soft beguiler of the stricken heart.
Like the Moon's influence on the Sea at rest,
Came Passion stealing o'er the Hermit's breast,
While on the Maiden's lip that mocked the dye
Of ripe red fruit, he bent his melting eye ;
And oh ! how showed the Lady's love for him,
The heaving bosom, and each quivering limb !
Like young Kadambas, when the leaf-buds swell,
At the warm touch of Spring they love so well ;

But still, with downcast eyes, she sought the ground,
And durst not turn their burning glances round.
Then with strong effort, SIVA lulled to rest,
The storm of passion in his troubled breast,
And seeks, with angry eyes that round him roll,
Whence came the tempest o'er his tranquil soul.
He looked, and saw the bold young Archer stand,
His bow bent ready in his skilful hand,
Drawn towards the eye—his shoulder well depressed,
And the left foot thrown forward as a rest.

Then was the Hermit-God to madness lashed,
Then from his eye red flames of fury flashed—
So changed the beauty of that glorious brow,
Scarce could the gaze support its terror now.
Hark ! heavenly voices sighing through the air:
Be calm, great SIVA, O be calm and spare !—
Alas ! that angry eye's resistless flashes
Have scorched the gentle King of Love to ashes !
But RETI saw not, for she swooned away,
Senseless and breathless on the earth she lay ;
Sleep while thou mayst, unconscious Lady, sleep !
Soon wilt thou rise to sigh and wake to weep.
E'en as the red bolt rives the leafy bough
Did SIVA blast the hinderer of his vow,
Then fled with all his train to some lone place
Far, far from Woman and her witching face.

Sad was HIMALAYA'S daughter,—grief and shame
O'er the young spirit of the Maiden came ;—
Grief—for she loved, and all her love was vain,
Shame—she was spurned before her youthful train ;

She turned away, with fear and woe oppressed,
To hide her sorrow on her father's breast;
Then, in the fond arms of her pitying sire,
Closed her sad eyes for fear of Siva's ire—
Still in his grasp the weary maiden lay,
While he sped swiftly on his homeward way.
Thus have I seen the elephant stoop to drink,
And lift the lilies from the fountain's brink—
Thus, when he rears his mighty head on high,
Across his tusks I've seen those lilies lie.

# Canto Fourth

## RETI'S LAMENT

SAD, solitary, helpless, faint, forlorn,
Woke KAMA's darling from her swoon to mourn ;
Too soon her gentle soul returned to know
The pangs of widowhood—that word of woe !
Scarce could she raise her, trembling, from the ground,
Scarce dared to bend her anxious gaze around,
Unconscious yet those greedy eyes should never
Feed on his beauty more—gone, gone for ever.

" Speak to me KAMA ! why so silent ? give
One word in answer—doth my KAMA live ? "
There on the turf his dumb cold ashes lay,
That fiery flash has scorched the soul away.
She clasped the dank earth in her wild despair,
Her bosom stained, and rent her long bright hair,
Till hill and valley caught the mourner's cry,
And pitying breezes echoed sigh for sigh.

" Oh thou wast beautiful—fond lovers sware
Their own bright darlings were like KAMA, fair ;

Sure woman's heart is stony—can it be
That I still live while *this* is all of thee?
Where art thou, KAMA? could my dearest leave
His own fond RETI here alone to grieve?
So must the sad forsaken Lotus die
When her bright river leaves his channel dry.
KAMA, dear KAMA, call again to mind
How thou wast ever gentle, I was kind—
Let not my prayer, thy RETI's prayer, be vain,
Come as of old, and bless these eyes again!
Wilt thou not hear me?—think of those sweet hours
When I would bind thee with my zone of flowers,
Those soft gay fetters o'er thee fondly wreathing,
Thine only punishment when gently breathing
In tones of love thy heedless sigh betrayed
The name, dear traitor! of some rival maid;
Then would I pluck a flowret from my tress
And beat thee till I forced thee to confess,
While in my play the falling leaves would cover
The eyes—the bright eyes—of my captive lover.
And then those words that made me, oh, so blest—
"Dear love, thy home is in my faithful breast!"
Alas, sweet words, too blissful to be true,
Or how couldst thou have died, nor RETI perish too?

Yes, I will fly to thee, of thee bereft,
And leave this world which thou, my life, hast left—
Cold, gloomy, now this wretched world must be,
For all its pleasures came from only thee.
When night has veiled the city in its shade
Thou, only thou, canst soothe the wandering maid,

And guide her trembling at the thunder's roar
Safe through the darkness to her lover's door.

In vain the wine-cup, as it circles by,
Lisps in her tongue and sparkles in her eye,
Long locks are streaming, and the cheek glows red,
But all is mockery, LOVE—dear LOVE—is dead.

The MOON, sweet spirit, shall lament for thee,
Late, dim, and joyless shall his rising be,—
Days shall fly on, and he forget to take
His full bright glory, mourning for thy sake.
Say, KAMA, say, whose arrow now shall be
The soft green shoot of thy dear Mango tree,
The favourite spray which Koils love so well,
And praise in sweetest strain its wondrous spell ?

This line of bees which strings thy useless bow
Hums mournful echo to my cries of woe ;
Come in thy lovely shape and teach again
The Koil's mate, that knows the tender strain,
Her gentle task to waft to longing ears
The lover's hope, the distant lover's fears.

Come, bring once more that ecstasy of bliss,
The fond dear look, the smile, and ah ! that kiss !
Fainting with woe, my soul refuses rest
When memory pictures how I have been blest.

See, thou didst weave a garland, love, to deck
With all Spring's fairest buds thy RETI's neck ;
Sweet are those flowers as they were culled to-day,
And is my KAMA's form more frail than they ?

His pleasant task my lover had begun,
But stern Gods took him ere the work was done ;
Return, my KAMA, at thy RETI's cry,
One foot's untinted with the rosy dye.

Now will I hie me to the fatal pile,
And ere Heaven's Maids have hailed thee with a smile,
Or on my love their winning glances thrown,
I will be there, and claim thee for mine own,
Yet though I come, my lasting shame will be
That I have lived one moment after thee.

Ah, how shall I thy funeral rites prepare,
Gone soul and body to the viewless air?
With thy dear SPRING I've seen thee talk and smile,
Shaping an arrow for thy bow the while;
Where is he now, thy darling friend, the giver
Of many a bright sweet arrow for thy quiver?
Is he too sent upon death's dreary path,
Scorched by the cruel God's inexorable wrath?"

Stricken in spirit by her cries of woe,
Like venomed arrows from a mighty bow,
A moment fled, and gentle SPRING was there,
To ask her grief, to soothe her wild despair;
She beat her breast more wildly than before,
With greater floods her weeping eyes ran o'er—
When friends are nigh the spirit finds relief
In the full gushing torrent of its grief.

"Turn, gentle friend, thy weeping eyes, and see
That dear companion who was all to me—
His crumbling dust with which the breezes play,
Bearing it idly in their course away—
White as the silver feathers of a dove,
Is all that's left me of my murdered love!

Now come, my KAMA,—SPRING, who was so dear,
Longs to behold thee—oh, appear, appear!

Fickle to women LOVE perchance may bend
His ear to listen to a faithful friend.
Remember, he walked ever at thy side
O'er bloomy meadows in the warm spring-tide,
That Gods above, and men, and fiends below
Should own the empire of thy mighty bow,
That ruthless bow, with pierces to the heart, which
Strung with a lotus-thread, a flower its dart.

As dies a torch when winds sweep roughly by,
So is my light for ever fled, and I,
The lamp his cheering rays no more illume,
Am wrapt in darkness, misery, and gloom.

Fate took my love, and spared the widow's breath,
Yet fate is guilty of a double death;
When the wild monster tramples on the ground
The tree some creeper garlands closely round,
Reft of the guardian which it thought so true,
Forlorn and withered, it must perish too.

Then come, dear friend, the true one's pile prepare,
And send me quickly to my husband there;
Call it not vain—the mourning Lotus dies
When the bright MOON, her lover, quits the skies;
When sinks the red cloud in the purple west,
Still clings his bride, the lightning, to his breast—
All nature keeps the eternal high decree,
Shall woman fail?—I come, my love, to thee!

Now on the pile my faint limbs will I throw,
Clasping *his* ashes—lovely even so,—
As if beneath my weary frame were spread
Soft leaves and blossoms for a flowery bed;
And oh, dear comrade (for in happier hours
Oft have I heaped a pleasant bed of flowers

For thee and him beneath the spreading tree)
Now quickly raise the pile for LOVE and me!
And in thy mercy gentle breezes send
To fan the flame that wafts away thy friend,
And shorten the sad moments that divide
Impatient KAMA from his RETI'S side;
Set water near us in a single urn,
We'll sip in heaven from the same in turn,
And to his spirit let thine offering be
Sprays fresh and lovely from the Mango tree,
Culled when the round young buds begin to swell,
For KAMA loved those fragrant blossoms well."

A heavenly voice breathed round her from above
As RETI thus complained in faithful love,
Falling in pity like the gentle rain
That brings the dying herbs to life again :—
"Bride of the flower-armed God, thy lord shall be
Not ever distant, ever deaf to thee;
Give me thine ear, sad lady, I will tell
Why perished KAMA, whom thou lovedst well—
The Lord of life in every troubled sense
Too warmly felt his fair child's influence;
He quenched the fire, but mighty vengeance came
On KAMA, fanner of the unholy flame;
When SIVA by her penance won has led
HIMALAYA'S daughter to her bridal bed,
His bliss to KAMA shall the God repay
And give again the form he snatched away.
Thus did the gracious God, at JUSTICE' prayer,
The term of LOVE'S sad punishment declare—

The High, like clouds. are fierce and gentle too,
Now hurl the bolt, now drop sweet heavenly dew.
Live, widowed lady, for thy lover's arms
Shall clasp again—oh, fondly clasp—thy charms ;
In summer heat the streamlet dies away
Beneath the fury of the God of Day ;
Then, in due season, comes the pleasant rain,
And all is fresh, and fair, and full again."

Thus breathed the spirit from the viewless air,
And stilled the raging of her wild despair ;
While SPRING consoled with every soothing art,
Cheered by that voice from heaven, the mourner's heart,
Who watched away the hours, so sad and slow,
That brought the limit of her weary woe,
As the pale Moon, quenched by the conquering light
Of garish day, longs for its own dear night.

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# Canto Fifth

## UMA'S REWARD

Now woe to UMA, for young LOVE is slain,
Her Lord hath left her, and her hope is vain;
Woe, woe to UMA! how the Mountain-Maid
Cursed her bright beauty for its feeble aid!
'Tis Beauty's guerdon which she loves the best,
To bless her lover, and in turn be blest.
Penance must aid her now—or how can she
Win the cold heart of that stern Deity?
Penance, long Penance—for that power alone
Can make such love, so high a Lord, her own.

But, ah! how troubled was her mother's brow
At the sad tidings of the mourner's vow!
She threw her arms around her own dear Maid,
Kissed, fondly kissed her, sighed, and wept, and prayed:—
"Are there no Gods, my child, to love thee here?
Frail is thy body, yet thy vow severe;
The lily, by the wild bee scarcely stirred,
Bends, breaks, and dies beneath the weary bird,"

Thick were her tears, her prayer was strong, but still
That prayer was weaker than her daughter's will ;
Who can recall the torrent's headlong force,
Or the bold spirit in its destined course ?
She sent a maiden to her sire, and prayed
He for her sake would grant some bosky shade,
That she might dwell in solitude, and there
Give all her soul to Penance and to Prayer ;
In gracious love the great HIMALAYA smiled,
And did the bidding of his darling child,
Then to that hill which peacocks love she came,
Known to all ages by the Lady's name.

Still to her purpose resolutely true,
Her string of noble pearls aside she threw,
Which, slipping here and there, and rubbed away
The sandal dust that on her bosom lay,
And clad her in a hermit coat of bark,
Rough to her gentle limbs, and gloomy dark,
Pressing too tightly, till her swelling breast
Broke into freedom through the unwonted vest.
Her matted hair was full as lovely now
As when 'twas braided o'er her polished brow ;
Thus do the beauties of the Lotus shine
When bees festoon it in a graceful line,
And, though the tangled weeds that crown the rill
Cling o'er it closely, it is lovely still.
With zone of grass the Votaress was bound,
Which reddened the fair form it girdled round
Never before the Lady's waist had felt
The ceaseless torment of so rough a belt.

Alas ! her weary vow has caused to fade
The lovely colours that adorned the Maid ;
Pale is her hand, and her long finger-tips
Steal no more splendour from her paler lips,
Or, from the ball which in her play would rest,
Made bright and fragrant, on her perfumed breast ;
Rough with the Sacred Grass those hands would be,
And worn with resting on her rosary.

Cold earth her couch—her canopy the skies—
Pillowed upon her arm the Lady lies ;
She who before was wont to rest her head
In the soft luxury of a sumptuous bed,
Vext by no troubles as she slumbered there,
But sweet flowers slipping from her loosened hair.

The Maid put off, but only for awhile,
Her passioned glances and her witching smile,
She lent the fawn her moving, melting gaze,
And the fond creeper all her winning ways.

The trees that blossom on that lonely mount
She watered daily from the neighbouring fount,
If she had been their nursing mother, she
Could not have tended them more carefully ;
Not e'en her boy—her own bright boy—shall stay
Her love for them ; her first dear children they).

Her gentleness had made the fawns so tame,
To her kind hand for fresh sweet grain they came,
And let the Maid before her friends compare
Her own with eyes that shone as softly there.

Then came the Hermits of the Holy Wood
To see the Votaress in her solitude ;

Grey elders came ;—though young the Maid might seem,
Her perfect virtue must command esteem.
They found her resting in that lonely spot,
The fire was kindled, and no rite forgot ;
In hermit's mantle was she clad ;—her look
Fixt in deep thought upon the Holy Book.
So pure that grove—all war was made to cease,
And savage monsters lived in love and peace ;
Pure was that grove—each newly built abode
Had leafy shrines where Fires of Worship glowed.

But far too mild her Penance, UMA thought,
To win from Heaven the lordly meed she sought ;
She would not spare her form, so fair and frail,
If mightier Penance could perchance prevail.
Of had sweet pastime wearied her, and yet
Fain would she match in toil the anchoret ;
Sure the soft Lotus at her birth had lent
Dear UMA's form its gentle element ;
But gold, commingled with her being, gave
That will so strong, so beautifully brave !
Full in the centre of four blazing piles
Sate the fair Lady of the winning smiles,
While on her head the mighty God of Day
Shot all the fury of his summer ray ;
Yet her fixt gaze she turned upon the skies,
And quenched his splendour with her brighter eyes.
To that sweet face, though scorched by rays from heaven,
Still was the beauty of the Lotus given,
Yet, worn by watching, round those orbs of light
A blackness gathered like the shades of night.

She cooled her dry lips in the bubbling stream,
And lived on Amrit from the pale moon-beam,
Sometimes in hunger culling from the tree
The rich ripe fruit that hung so temptingly.

Scorched by the fury of the noon-tide rays,
And fires that round her burned with ceaseless blaze,
Summer passed o'er her—rains of Autumn came
And thoroughly drenched the Lady's tender frame,
So steams the earth, when mighty torrents pour
On thirsty fields all dry and parched before.

The first clear rain-drops falling on her brow,
Gem it one moment with their light, and now
Kissing her sweet lip find a welcome rest
In the deep valley of the Lady's breast ;
Then wander broken by the fall within
The mazy channels of her dimpled skin.

There as she lay upon her rocky bed,
No sumptuous roof above her gentle head,
Dark Night, her only witness, turned her eyes,
Red lightnings flashing from the angry skies,
And gazed upon her voluntary pain,
In wind, in sleet, in thunder, and in rain.

Still lay the Maiden on the cold damp ground,
Though blasts of winter hurled their snows around,
Still pitying in her heart the mournful fate
Of those poor birds, so fond, so desolate,—
Doomed, hapless pair, to list each other's moan
Through the long hours of night, sad and alone !

Chilled by the rain, the tender Lotus sank,—
She filled its place upon the streamlet's bank ;
Sweet was her breath as when that lovely flower
Sheds its best odour in still evening's hour ;

Red as its leaves her lips of coral hue,
Red as those quivering leaves they quivered too.

Of all stern Penance it is called the chief,
To nourish life upon the fallen leaf;
But even this the Ascetic Maiden spurned,
And for all time a glorious title earned,—
APARNA—Lady of the unbroken fast!—
Have Sages called her, Saints who knew the past.
Fair as the Lotus' fibres, soft as they,
In these stern vows she passed her night and day,
No mighty anchoret had e'er essayed
The ceaseless Penance of this gentle Maid.

There came a Hermit—reverend was he,
As the First Rank's embodied sanctity—
With coat of skin, with staff and matted hair,
His face was radiant, and he spake her fair.
Up rose the Maid the holy man to greet,
And humbly bowed before the Hermit's feet;
Though meditation fill the pious breast,
It finds a welcome for a glorious guest:
The Sage received the honour duly paid,
And fixed his earnest gaze upon the Maid;
While through her frame unwonted vigour ran
Thus, in his silver speech, the blameless Saint began:—
'How can thy tender frame, sweet Lady, bear
In thy firm spirit's task its fearful share?
Canst thou the grass and fuel duly bring,
And still unwearied seek the freshening spring?
Say, do the creeper's slender shoots expand,
Seeking each day fresh water from thy hand,

Till like thy lip each ruddy tendril glows,
That lip which, faded, still outreds the rose ?
With loving glance the timid fawns draw nigh,
Say dost thou still with joy their wants supply ?
For thee, O Lotus-eyed, their glances shine,
Mocking the brightness of each look of thine ;
O Mouutain-Lady, it is truly said
That heavenly charms to sin have never led,
For even Penitents may learn of thee
How pure, how gentle Beauty's self may be.
Bright GANGA falling with her heavenly waves,
HIMALAYA's head with sacred water laves,
Bearing those flowers, the seven great Sages fling,
To crown the forehead of the Mountain-King !—
Yet do thy deeds, O bright-haired Maiden, shed
A richer glory round his awful head.
Purest of motives, Duty leads thy heart,
Interest and Pleasure there may claim no part ;
O noble Maiden, holy Sages tell—
Friendship may soon in gentle bosoms dwell,
Seven steps together bind the lasting tie,
Then bend on me, dear Saint, a gracious eye !
Fain, lovely UMA would a Brahman learn
What noble guerdon would thy Penance earn ;
Say, art thou toiling for a second birth,
Where dwells the great Creator ?—o'er the earth
Resistless sway ? Or fair as Beauty's Queen,
Peerless, immortal, shall thy form be seen ?
The lonely soul by grief and anguish broken,
By Penance' aid may win some gracious token,
But what, O faultless one, can move thy heart
To dwell in solitude and prayer apart ?

Why should the cloud of grief obscure thy brow,
Mid all thy kindred, who so loved as thou ?
Foes hast thou none—for what rash hand would dare
From serpent's head the magic gem to tear ?
Why dost thou seek the Hermit's garb to try,
Thy silken raiment and thy gems thrown by ?
As though the Sun his glorious state should leave,
Rayless to harbour mid the shades of eve.

Wouldst thou win Heaven by thy holy spells ?
Already with the Gods thy father dwells ;—
A husband, Lady ?—O forbear the thought,
A priceless jewel seeks not, but is sought.
Maiden, thy deep sighs tell me, it is so,
Yet, doubtful still, my spirit seeks to know
Couldst thou e'er love in vain ?—What heart so cold
That hath not eagerly its worship told ?
Ah ! could the cruel loved one, thou fair Maid,
Look with indifference on that bright hair's braid ?
Thy locks are hanging loosely o'er thy brow,
Thine ear is shaded by no Lotus now !
See, where the Sun hath scorched that tender neck
Which precious jewels once were proud to deck,
Still gleams the line where they were wont to cling,
As faintly shows the Moon's o'ershadowed ring.

Now sure thy loved one, vain in beauty's pride,
Dreamed of himself when wandering at thy side,
Or he would count him blest to be the mark
Of that dear eye, so soft, so lustrous dark !

But, gentle UMA, let thy labour cease,
Turn to thy home, fair Saint, and rest in peace !
By many a year of Penance hardly won
Rich is my store of merits, beauteous one !

Take then the half, thy secret purpose name,
Nor in stern hardships wear thy tender frame!"

The holy Brahman ceased—but UMA's breast
In silence heaved, by love and fear opprest;
In mute appeal she turned her languid eye,
Darkened with weeping, not with softening dye,
To bid her maiden's friendly tongue declare
The cherished secret of her deep despair:—
"Hear, holy Father, if thou still wouldst know,
Why her frail form endures this pain and woe—
As the soft Lotus makes a screen to stay
The noontide fury of the God of Day;
Proudly disdaining all the Lords above,
With heart and soul she seeks for SIVA's love,
For him alone, the Trident-wielding God,
The thorny paths of Penance hath she trod;
But since that mighty one hath KAMA slain,
Vain every hope, and every effort vain;
E'en as life fled, a keen but flowery dart
Young LOVE, the Archer, aimed at SIVA's heart;
The God in anger hurled the shaft away,
But deep in UMA's tender soul it lay;
Alas, poor Maid! she knows no comfort now,
Her soul's on fire—her wild locks hide her brow;
She quits her father's halls, and frenzied roves
The icy mountain and the lonely groves;
Oft as the Maidens of the Minstrel throng
To hymn great SIVA's praises raised the song,
The lovelorn Lady's sobs and deep-drawn sighs
Drew tears of pity from their gentle eyes.

Wakeful and fevered in the dreary night
Scarce closed her eyes, and then in wild affright
Rang through the halls her very bitter cry,
God of the azure neck, why dost thou fly?
While their soft bands her loving arms would cast
Round the dear vision fading all too fast.
Her skilful hand, with true love-guided art,
Had traced the image graven on her heart—
'Art thou all present? Dost thou fail to see
Poor UMA's anguish and her love for thee?'
Thus oft in frenzied grief her voice was heard,
Chiding the portrait with reproachful word.
Long thus in vain for SIVA's love she strove,
Then turned in sorrow to this holy Grove,
Since the sad Maid hath sought these forest glades
To hide her grief amid the dreary shades,
The fruit hath ripened on the spreading bough,
But ah! no fruit hath crowned her holy vow;
Her faithful friends alone must ever mourn
To see that beauteous form by Penance worn,
But oh! that SIVA would some favour deign,
As INDRA pitieth the parching plain!"
The Maiden ceased—his secret joy dissembling,
The Brahman turned to UMA pale and trembling,
"And is it thus—or doth the Maiden jest,
Is this the darling secret of thy breast?"

She clasped the rosary in her quivering hand,
Scarce could the Maid her choking voice command:—
"O holy Sage, learned in the Vedas' lore,
'Tis even thus—Great SIVA I adore;

Thus would my steadfast heart his love obtain,
For this I gladly bear the toil and pain;
Surely the strong desire, the earnest will,
May win some favour from his mercy still."

"Lady," cried he "that mighty Lord I know,
Ever his presence bringeth care and woe,
And wouldst thou still a second time prepare
The sorrows of his fearful life to share?
Deluded Maid, how shall thy tender hand,
Decked with the nuptial bracelet's jewelled band,
Be clasped in his, when fearful serpents twine
In scaly horror round that arm divine?
How shall thy robe, with gay flamingoes gleaming,
Suit with his coat of hide with blood-drops streaming?
Of old thy pathway led where flowerets sweet
Made pleasant carpets for thy gentle feet,
And e'en thy foes would turn in grief away
To see those vermeil-tinted limbs essay,
Where scattered tresses strew the mournful place,
Their gloomy path amid the tombs to trace.
On SIVA's heart the funeral ashes rest,
Say, gentle Lady, shall they stain thy breast,
Where the rich tribute of the Sandal trees
Sheds a pure odour on the amorous breeze?
A royal bride returning in thy state,
The King of Elephants should bear thy weight:
How wilt thou brook the mockery and the scorn
When thou on SIVA's Bull art meanly borne?
Sad that the crescent Moon his crest should be,—
And shall that mournful fate be shared by thee?

His crest, the glory of the evening skies,
His bride, the moonlight of our wondering eyes!
Deformed is he—his ancestry unknown,
By vilest garb his poverty is shown;
O fawn-eyed Lady, how should SIVA gain
That heart for which the glorious strive in vain?
No charms hath he to win a maiden's eye,
Cease from thy Penance, hush the fruitless sigh!
Unmeet is he thy faithful heart to share,
Child of the Mountain, Maid of beauty rare!
Not mid the gloomy tombs do Sages raise
The holy altar of their prayer and praise."

Impatient UMA listened; the quick blood
Rushed to her temples in an angry flood:
Her quivering lip, her darkly-flashing eye
Told that the tempest of her wrath was nigh;
Proudly she spoke:—"How couldst *thou* tell aright
Of one like SIVA, perfect, infinite!
'Tis ever thus, the Mighty and the Just
Are scorned by souls that grovel in the dust;
Their lofty goodness and their motives wise
Shine all in vain before such blinded eyes;
Say who is greater, he who strives for power,
Or he who succours in misfortune's hour?
Refuge of Worlds, O how should SIVA deign
To look on men enslaved to paltry gain?
The spring of wealth himself, he careth nought
For the vile treasures that mankind have sought;
His dwelling-place amid the tombs may be,
Yet Monarch of the three great worlds is he;

What though no love his outward form may claim,
The stout heart trembles at his awful name ;
Who can declare the wonders of his might,
The Trident-wielding God, who knows aright ?
Whether around him deadly serpents twine,
Or if his jewelled wreaths more brightly shine ;
Whether in rough and wrinkled hide arrayed,—
Or silken robe, in glittering folds displayed,—
If on his brow the crescent moon he bear,
Or if a shrunken skull be withering there !
The funeral ashes touched by him acquire
The glowing lustre of eternal fire ;
Falling in golden showers, the Heavenly Maids
Delight to pour them on their shining braids.
What though no treasures fill his storehouse full,
What though he ride upon his horned bull ;
Not e'en may INDRA in his pride withhold
The lowly homage that is his of old,—
But turns his raging Elephant to meet
His mighty Lord, and bows before his feet,
Right proud to colour them rich rosy red
With the bright flowers that deck his prostrate head.
Thy slanderous tongue proclaims thy evil mind,
Yet in thy speech *one* word of truth we find ;
*Unknown* thou call'st him,—how should mortal man
Count when the days of BRAHMA's Lord began ?
But cease these idle words,—though all be true,
His failings many and his virtues few,
Still clings my heart to him, its chosen Lord,
Nor fails nor faulters at thy treacherous word.
Dear Maiden, bid you eager boy depart,
Why should the slanderous tale defile his heart ?

Most guilty who the faithless speech begins,
But he who stays to listen also sins."

She turned away,—with wrath her bosom swelling,
Its vest of bark in angry pride repelling,—
But sudden, lo, before her wondering eyes
In altered form she sees the Sage arise;
'Tis SIVA's self before the astonished Maid,
In all his gentlest majesty displayed;
She saw, she trembled—like a river's course,
Checked for a moment in its onward force,
By some huge rock amid the torrent hurled;
Where erst the foaming waters madly curled;
One foot uplifted—shall she turn away?
Unmoved the other—shall the Maiden stay?
The silver Moon on SIVA's forehead shone,
While softly spake the God in gracious tone:—
"O gentle Maiden, wise and true of soul,
Lo, now I bend beneath thy sweet control!
Won by thy Penance, and thy holy vows,
Thy willing slave SIVA before thee bows!"

He spake, and rushing through her languid frame
At his dear words returning vigour came;
She knew but this, that all her cares were o'er,
Her sorrows ended, she should weep no more!

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# Canto Sixth

## UMA'S ESPOUSALS

Now gentle Uma bade a damsel bear
To Siva, Soul of All, her maiden prayer:—
"Wait the high sanction of Himalaya's will,
And ask his daughter from the royal Hill."
Then ere the God, her own dear Lord, replied,
In blushing loveliness she sought his side—
Thus the young Mango hails the approaching Spring
By its own tuneful bird's sweet welcoming.

In Uma's ear he softly whispered, yea,
Then scarce could tear him from her arms away,
Swift with a thought he summoned from above
The Seven bright Saints to bear his tale of love;
They came, and She, the Heavenly Dame, was there,
Lighting with glories all the radiant air—
Just freshly bathed in sacred Ganga's tide,
Gemmed with the dancing flowers that deck her side,
And richly scented with the nectarous rill,
That heavenly Elephants from their brows distil,

Fair strings of pearl their radiant fingers hold,
Clothed are their limbs in hermit coats of gold;
Their rosaries, large gems of countless price,
Shone like the fruit that glows in Paradise,
As though the glorious trees that blossom there
Had sought the forest for a Life of Prayer.
With all his thousand beams the God of Day,
Urging his coursers down the sloping way,
His banner furled at the approach of Night,
Looks up in reverence on those Lords of Light.

Ancient Creators!—thus the Wise, who know,
Gave them a name in ages long ago—
With BRAHMA joining in Creation's plan,
And perfecting the work His will began;
Still firm in Penance, though the hermit-vow
Bears a ripe harvest for the Sages now.

Brightest in glory mid that glorious band
Did the fair Queen, the Heavenly Lady, stand;
Fixing her loving eyes upon her spouse,
She seemed just sent to crown the Sage's vows
With sweet immortal joy—the dearest prize
Strong prayer could merit from the envious skies.

With equal honour on the Queen and all
Did the kind glance of SIVA's welcome fall;
No partial favour by the Good is shown,
They count not station, but the deed alone.
So fair she shone upon his raptured view,
He longed for Wedlock's heavenly pleasures too,—
What hath such power to lead the soul above
By Virtue's pathway, as a dear Wife's love!
Scarce had the holy motive lent its aid
To knit great SIVA to the Mountain-Maid,

When KAMA's spirit that had swooned in fear
Breathed once again and deemed forgiveness near.

The ancient Sages reverently adored
The World's great Father and its Sovran Lord,
And while a soft ecstatic thrilling ran
O'er their celestial frames, they thus began :—
"Glorious the fruit our Holy Studies bear,
Our constant Penance, Sacrifice and prayer,
For that high place within thy thoughts we gain
Which fancy strives to reach, but longs in vain !
How blest is he, the glory of the Wise,
Deep in whose thoughtful breast thy Godhead lies !
But who may tell his joy who rests enshrined,
O BRAHMA's great Creator, in thy mind !
We dwell on high above the cold Moon's ray,
Beneath our mansion glows the God of Day,
But now thy favour lends us brighter beams,
Blest with thy love our Star unchanging gleams.
How should we tell what soul-entrancing bliss
Enthrals our spirit at an hour like this ?
Great Lord of All, thou Soul of Life indwelling
We crave one word thy wondrous nature telling—
Though to our eyes thy outward form be shown,
How can we know thee as thou shouldst be known ?
In this thy present shape, we pray thee, say
Dost thou create ? dost thou preserve or slay ?
But speak thy wish ; called from our starry rest
We wait, O SIVA, for our Lord's behest."

Then answered thus that Sovran Lord—the while
Flashed from his dazzling teeth so white a smile,

The Moon that crowned him poured a larger stream
Of living glory from that pearly gleam—
"Ye know, great Sages of a race divine,
No selfish want e'er prompteth deed of mine;
Do not the Forms—eight varied Forms—I wear,
The truth of this to all the World declare?
Now, as that thirsty bird that drinks the rain
Prays the kind clouds of Heaven to soothe its pain,
So the Gods pray me, trembling neath their foe,
To send a Child of mine and end their woe;
I seek the Mountain-Maiden as my bride,
Our hero Son shall tame the Demon's pride,—
Thus the Priest bids the holy Fire arise,
Struck from the wood to aid the Sacrifice.
Go, ask HIMALAYA for the lovely Maid,
Blest are those bridals which the Holy aid;
So shall more glorious honours gild my name,
And win the father yet a prouder fame.
Nor, O ye heavenly Sages, need I teach
What for the Maiden's hand shall be your speech,
For still the Wise in worthiest honour hold
The rules and precepts ye ordained of old,—
This Lady too shall aid your mission there,
Best for such task a skilful Matron's care.
And now, my heralds, to your task away,
Where proud HIMALAYA holds his royal sway;
Then meet me where this mighty torrent raves
Down the steep channel with its headlong waves."

Thus while that holiest One his love confessed,
The Hermits listened; from their saintly breast

Fled the false shame that yet had lingered there,
And Love and Wedlock beamed divinely fair.

On through the Heaven, o'er tracts of swordlike blue,
Towards the gay City, swift as thought, they flew,—
Bright with high domes and palaces most fair,
As if proud ALAKA were planted there,
Or PARADISE poured forth, in showers that bless,
The rich o'erflowings of its loveliness.
Round lofty towers adorned with gems and gold
Her guardian stream the holy GANGA rolled ;
On every side, the rampant's glowing crown,
Bright wreaths of fragrant flowers hung waving down,—
Flowers that might tempt the Maids of heavenly birth
To linger fondly o'er that pride of earth.
Their noble Elephants, unmoved by fear,
The distant roaring of the Lions hear ;
In beauty peerless, and unmatched in speed,
Their thousand coursers of celestial breed ;
Through their broad streets bright Sylphs and Minstrels rove,
Their dames are Goddesses of stream and grove.
Hark ! the drum echoes louder and more loud
From glittering halls whose spires are wrapt in cloud—
It were the thunder, but that voice of fear
Falls not in measured time upon the ear.
'Tis balmy cool, for many a heavenly tree,
With quivering leaves and branches waving free,
Sheds a delightful freshness through the air—
Fans which no toil of man has stationed there.
The crystal chambers where they feast at night
Flash back the beamings of the starry light,—

So brightly pure that silver glory's shed,
Playing so fondly round each beauteous head,
That all seem gifted from those Lights above
With richest tokens of superior love.
How blest its Maidens ! cloudless is their day,
And radiant herbs illume their nightly way ;
No term of days, but endless youth they know,
No Death save him who bears the Flowery Bow ;
Their direst swoon, their only frenzy this—
The trance of Love, the ecstasy of bliss !
Ne'er can their lovers for one hour withstand
The frown, the quivering lip, the scornful hand,
But seek forgiveness of the angry fair,
And woo her smile with many an earnest prayer.
Around, wide gardens spread their pleasant bowers.
Where the bright Champac opes her fragrant flowers—
Dear shades, beloved by the Sylphs that roam
In dewy evening from their mountain home.

Ah ! why should mortals fondly strive to gain
Heaven and its joys by ceaseless toil and pain ?
E'en the Saints envied as their steps drew near,
And owned a brighter Heaven was opened here.
They lighted down ; braided was each long tress,
Bright as the pictured flame, as motionless ;
HIMALAYA's palace-warders in amaze
On the Seven Sages turned their eager gaze,
A noble company of celestial race
Where each in order of his years had place,—
Glorious, as when the SUN, his head inclining,
Sees this own image mid the waters shining.

To greet them with a gift HIMALAYA sped,
Earth to her centre shaking at his tread;
By his dark lips with mountain metals dyed,
His arms like pines that clothe his lofty side —
By his proud stature, by his stony breast,
Lord of the Snowy Hills he stood confest.

On to his Council-hall he led the way,
Nor failed due honour to the Saints to pay:
On couch of reed the Monarch bade them rest,
And thus with uplift hands those Heavenly Lords addressed:
'Like soft rain falling from a cloudless sky,
Or fruit, when bloom has failed to glad the eye,
So are ye welcome, Sages; thus I feel
Ecstatic thrilling o'er my spirit steal,
Changed, like dull senseless iron to burning gold,
Or some rapt creature, when the Heavens unfold,
To eyes yet dim with tears of earthly care,
The rest, the pleasures, and the glory there.

Long pilgrim bands from this auspicious day
To my pure hill shall bend their constant way;
Famed shall it be o'er all the lands around,
For where the Good have been is holy ground.
Now am I doubly pure, for GANGA's tide
Falls on my head from Heaven and laves my side:
Henceforth I boast a second stream as sweet,
The water, Sages, that has touched your feet.

Twice by your favour is HIMALAYA blest,—
This towery mountain that your feet have prest,
And this my moving form is happier still
To wait your bidding, to perform your will.

These mighty limbs that fill the Heaven's expanse
Sink down, o'erpowered, in a blissful trance;

So bright your presence—at the glorious sight
My brooding shades of darkness turn to light,
The gloom that haunts my mountain caverns flies,
And cloudy passion in the spirit dies.
O say, if here your arrowy course ye sped
To throw fresh glory round my towering head?
Surely your wish, ye Mighty Ones, can crave
No aid, no service from your willing slave,
Yet deem me worthy of some high behest,
The Lord commandeth, and the slave is blest.
Declare your pleasure, then, bright Heavenly Band,
We crave no guerdon but your sole command;
Yours are we all, HIMALAYA and his bride,
And this dear maiden child our hope and pride."

Not once he spake—his cavern mouths around
In hollow echoings gave again the sound.
Of all who speak beyond compare the best,
ANGIRAS answered at the Saint's request:—
"This power hast thou, great King, and mightier far,
Thy mind is lofty as thy summits are;
Sages say truly, VISHNU is thy name,
His spirit breatheth in thy mountain frame;
Within the caverns of thy boundless breast
All things that move and all that move not rest.
How on his head so soft, so delicate,
Could the great Snake uphold the huge Earth's weight,
Did not thy roots, far-reaching down to Hell,
Bear up the burden and assist him well?
Thy streams of praise, thy pure rills' ceaseless flow
Make glad the nations wheresoe'er they go,

Till, shedding purity on every side,
They sink at length in boundless Ocean's tide.
Blest is fair GANGA, for her heavenly stream
Flows from the feet of him that sits supreme,
And blest once more, O mighty Hill, is she
That her bright waters spring anew from thee!
Vast grew his body when the avenging God
In three huge strides o'er all Creation trod—
Above, below, his form increased, but thou
Wast ever glorious and as vast as now.
By thee is famed SUMERU forced to hide
His flashing rays and pinnacles of pride,
For thou hast won thy station in the Skies
Mid the great Gods who claim the Sacrifice.

Firm and unmoved remains thy lofty hill,
Yet thou canst bow before the Holy still,
Now—for the glorious work will fall on thee—
Hear thou the cause of this our embassy;
We also, Mountain Monarch, since we bear
To thee the message, in the labour share;
The Highest, Mightiest, Noblest One, adored
By the proud title of our Sovran Lord—
The Crescent Moon upon his brow bears he,
His all the wondrous powers of Deity—
He in this Earth and varied Forms displayed,
Bound each to other by exchange of aid,
Guides the great World and all the things that are,
As flying coursers whirl the glittering car.
Whom good men seek with holy Thought and Prayer,
Who fills their breast and makes his dwelling there;
When Saints, we read, his lofty sphere attain
They ne'er may fall to this base earth again—

His Messengers, great King, we crave the hand
Of thy fair daughter at the God's command,
At such blest union, as of TRUTH and VOICE,
A father's heart should grieve not, but rejoice.
Her Lord is Father of the World, and she
Of all that liveth shall the Mother be;
Gods that adore him with the Neck of Blue
In homage bent shall hail the Lady too,
And give a glory to her feet with gems
That sparkle in their priceless diadems.
Hear what a roll shall blazon forth thy line,—
Maid, Father, Suitor, Messengers divine!
Give him the chosen Lady, and aspire
To call thy Son the Universe's Sire—
He laudeth none but all mankind shall raise
To Him through endless time the songs of praise."

Thus while he spake the Lady bent her head
To hide her cheek, now blushing rosy red,
And numbered o'er with seeming care the while
Her Lotus' petals in sweet maiden guile.
With pride and joy HIMALAYA's heart beat high,
Yet ere he spake he looked to MENA's eye—
Full well he knew a mother's gentle care
Learns her child's heart and Love's deep secret there,
And this the hour, he felt, when fathers seek
Her eye for answer or her changing cheek.
His eager look HIMALAYA scarce had bent
When MENA's eye beamed back her glad assent—
O gentle Wives! your fondest wish is still
To have with him you love one heart, one will!

He threw his arms around the blushing Maid
In queenly garment and in gems arrayed,
Awhile was silent, then in rapture cried,
"Come, O my daughter! Come, thou destined bride
Of SIVA, Lord of All—this glorious band
Of Saints have sought thee at the God's command,
And I thy Sire this happy day obtain
The best reward a father's wish would gain!"
Then to the Saints he cried:—"Pure Hermits, see
The Spouse of SIVA greets your company!"
They looked in rapture on the Maid, and poured
Their fullest blessing on her Heavenly Lord;
So low she bowed, the gems that decked her hair
And sparkled in her ear fell loosened there;
Then with sweet modesty and joy opprest
She hid her blushes on the Lady's breast,
Who cheered the mother weeping for her child,
Her own dear UMA, till again she smiled—
Such bliss and glory should be hers above,
Yea, mighty SIVA's undivided love.

They named the fourth for UMA's nuptial day;
Then sped the Sages on their homeward way:
And thanked by SIVA with a gracious eye
Sought their bright rest amid the stars on high.
Through all those weary days the lover sighed
To wind his fond arms round his gentle bride—
Oh, if the Lord of Heaven could find no rest,
Think, think how Love—strong Love,—can tear a mortal's
breast!

## Canto Seventh

### UMA'S BRIDAL

In light and glory dawned the expected day
Blest with a kindly star's auspicious ray,
When gaily gathered at HIMALAYA'S call
His kinsmen to the solemn festival.
Through the broad City every dame's awake
To grace the bridal for her Monarch's sake;
So great their love for him, this single care
Makes one vast household of the thousands there.
Heaven is not brighter than the royal street
Where flowers lie scattered neath the nobles' feet,
And banners waving to the breeze unfold
Their silken broidery over gates of gold.

And she, their child, upon her bridal day
Bears her dear parents' every thought away—
So, when from distant shores a friend returns,
With deeper love each inmost spirit burns—
So, when grim Death restores his prey again
Joy brighter shines from memory of pain.

Each noble matron of HIMALAYA'S race
Folds his dear UMA in a long embrace,
Pours blessings on her head, and prays her take
Some priceless jewel for her friendship's sake.

With sweetest influence a star of power
Had joined the spotted Moon--at that blest hour
To deck fair UMA many a noble dame
And many a gentle maid assiduous came;
And well she graced their toil, more brightly fair
With feathery grass and wild flowers in her hair—
A silken robe flowed free below her waist,
Her sumptuous head a glittering arrow graced—
So shines the young unclouded Moon at last,
Greeting the Sun, its darksome season past.

Sweet-scented Lodra dust and Sandal dyed
The delicate beauties of the fair young bride,
Veiled with a soft light robe : her tiring-girls
Then led her to a chamber decked with pearls
And paved with sapphires, where the lulling sound
Of choicest music breathed divinely round.
There o'er the Lady's limbs they poured by turns
Streams of pure water from their golden urns.

Fresh from the cooling bath the lovely Maid
In fairest white her tender form arrayed—
So opes the Kàsa all her shining flowers
Lured from their buds by softly falling showers.
Then to a court with canopies o'erhead
A crowd of noble dames the Maiden led--
A court for solemn rites, where gems and gold
Adorn the pillars that the roof uphold.

There on a couch they set her with her face
Turned toward the East—so lovely then the grace
Of that dear Maid so ravishing her smile,
E'en her attendants turned to gaze awhile,
For though the brightest gems around her lay,
Her brighter beauty stole their eyes away.
Through her long tresses one a flower-wreath wound,
And one with fragrant grass her temples crowned,
While o'er her head sweet clouds of incense rolled
To dry and perfume every shining fold.
Bright dyes of Saffron and the scented wood
Adorned her beauty, till the Maiden stood
Fairer than GANGA when the Love-birds play
O'er sandy islets in her silvery bay.
To what rare beauty shall her maids compare
Her clear brow shaded by her glossy hair ?
Less dazzling pure the sacred Lotus shines
Flecked by the thronging bees in dusky lines—
Less bright the Moon, when a dark band of cloud
Enhances beauties which it could not shroud.
Behind her ear a head of barley drew
The eye to gaze upon its golden hue,
But then her cheek with glowing Saffron dyed
To richer beauty called the glance aside;
Though from those lips where Beauty's guerdon lay
The vermeil tints were newly washed away,
Yet o'er them, as she smiled, a ray was thrown
Of quivering brightness that was all their own.

"Lay this dear foot upon thy lover's head
Crowned with the Moon!"—the laughing maiden said,

Who dyed her Lady's feet—no word spake she,
But beat her with her flower-wreath playfully.
Then tiring-women took the jetty dye
To guard, not deck, the beauty of her eye
Whose languid half-shut glances might compare
With Lotus leaves just opening to the air ;
And as fresh gems adorned her neck and arms,
So quickly changing grew the Maiden's charms,
Like some fair plant where bud succeeding bud
Unfolds new beauty ; or a silver flood
Where gay birds follow quickly ; or like Night,
When crowding stars come forth in all their light.
Oft as the mirror would her glance beguile
She longed to meet her Lord's approving smile—
Her tasteful skill the timid maid essays
To win one smile of love, one word of praise.

The happy Mother took the golden dye
And raised to hers young UMA's beaming eye—
Then swelled her bosom with maternal pride
As thus she decked her darling for a bride—
Oh, she had longed to trace on that fair brow
The nuptial line, yet scarce could mark it now !
On UMA's rounded arm the woollen band
Was fixt securely by the Nurse's hand—
Blind with the tears that filled her swimming eye,
In vain the Mother strove that band to tie.
Spotless as curling foam-flakes stood she there,
As yielding soft, as graceful and as fair—
Or like the glory of an autumn night
Robed by the full Moon in a veil of light.

Then at her Mother's hest, the Maid adored
The spirit of each high ancestral Lord,
Nor failed she next the noble Dames to greet,
And give due honour to their reverend feet.
They raised the Maiden as she bowed her head—
"Thine be the fulness of his love!"—they said;
Half of his being, blessing high as this
Can add no rapture to her perfect bliss.

Well-pleased HIMALAYA viewed the pomp and pride
Meet for his daughter, meet for SIVA'S bride,
Then sought the Hall with all his friends to wait
The bridegroom's coming with a Monarch's state.
Meanwhile by Heavenly Matrons' care displayed
Upon KUVERA'S lofty mount were laid
The ornaments of SIVA, which of yore
At his first nuptials PURA'S conqueror wore;
He laid his hand upon the dress, but how
Shall robes so sad, so holy, grace him now?
His own dire vesture took a shape as fair
As gentle bridegroom e'er could wish to wear—
The withering scull that glazed the eye with dread,
Shone a bright coronal to grace his head;
That Elephant's hide the God had worn of old
Was now a silken robe inwrought with gold;
Ere this his body was with dust besprent,
Soft unguent now it shed delightful scent;
And that mid-eye which glittering like a star
Shot the wild terror of its glance afar—
So softly now its golden radiance beamed—
A mark of glory on his forehead seemed.

His twining serpents, destined still to be
The pride and honour of the Diety,
Changed but their bodies—in each sparkling crest
The blazing gems still shone their loveliest.
What need of jewels on the brow of Him
Who wears the Crescent Moon ?—no spot may dim
Its youthful beauty, e'en in light of day
Shedding the glory of its quenchless ray.

Well-pleased the God in all his pride arrayed
Saw his bright image mirrored in the blade
Of the huge sword they brought ; then calmly leant
On NANDI'S arm, and toward his Bull he went,
Whose broad back covered with a tiger's hide
Was steep to climb as Mount KAILASA'S side,
Yet the dread monster humbly shrank for fear
And bowed in reverence as his Lord drew near.
The Matrons followed him, a saintly throng,
Their ear-rings waving as they dashed along—
Sweet faces, with such glories round them shed
As made the air one lovely Lotus bed.
On flew those bright Ones--KALI came behind,
The skulls that decked her rattling in the wind :
Like the dark rack that scuds across the sky,
With herald Lightning and the Crane's shrill cry.

Hark ! from the glorious bands that lead the way,
Harp, drum, and pipe, and shrilling trumpet's bray,
Burst through the sky upon the startled ear
And tell the Gods the hour of worship 's near.
They came ; the SUN presents a silken shade
Which Heaven's own artist for the God had made,

Gilding his brows, as though bright GANGA rolled
Adown his holy head her waves of gold.
She in her Goddess-shape divinely fair,
And YAMUNA, sweet River-Nymph, were there,
Fanning their Lord, that fancy still might deem
Swans waved their pinions round each Lady of the Stream.

E'en BRAHMA came—Creator—Lord of Might,—
And VISHNU glowing from the realms of light;
"Ride on!" they cried, "thine, thine for ever be
The strength, the glory, and the victory!"
To swell his triumph that high blessing came
Like holy oil upon the rising flame.
In those Three Persons the one God was shown,
Each First in place, each Last,—not one alone;
Of SIVA, VISHNU, BRAHMA, each may be
First, second, third, among the Blessed Three.

By INDRA led, each World-upholding Lord
With folded hands the mighty God adored,—
In humble robes arrayed, the pomp and pride
Of glorious Deity were laid aside;
They signed to NANDI, and the favourite's hand
Guided his eye upon the suppliant band.

He spake to VISHNU, and on INDRA smiled,
To BRAHMA bowed—the Lotus' mystic child;
On all the hosts of heaven his friendly eye
Beamed duly welcome as they crowded nigh.
The Seven Great Saints their blessings o'er him shed,
And thus in answer, with a smile, he said:—
"Hail, mighty Sages! hail, ye Sons of Light!
My chosen Priests to celebrate this rite."

Now in sweet tones the Heavenly Minstrels tell
His praise, beneath whose might TRIPURA fell;
He moves to go; from his Moon-crest a ray
Sheds quenchless light on his triumphant way.
On through the air his swift Bull bore him well,
Decked with the gold of many a tinkling bell;
Tossing from time to time his head on high,
Enwreathed with clouds as he flew racing by,
As though in furious charge he had uptorn
A bank of clay upon his mighty horn.

Swiftly they came where in its beauty lay
The City subject to HIMALAYA'S sway—
No foeman's foot had ever trod those halls,
No foreign bands encamped around the walls;
SIVA'S bright glances fixed their eager hold
On that fair City as with threads of gold.
The God whose neck still gleams with cloudy blue
Burst on the wondering people's upturned view,
And on the earth descended, from the path
His shafts once dinted in avenging wrath.
Forth from the gates a noble army poured
To do meet honour to the mighty Lord;
With all his friends on Elephants of state
The King of Mountains passed the City gate,
So gaily decked, the Princes all were seen
Like moving hills inwrapt in bowery green.
As the full rushing of two streams that pour
Beneath one bridge with loud tumultuous roar,
So through the City's open gate streamed in
Mountains and Gods with tumult and with din.

So glorious was the sight,—wonder and shame,
When SIVA bowed him, o'er the Monarch came;
He knew not he had bent his lofty crest
In reverent greeting to his heavenly guest.
HIMALAYA, joying in the festive day,
Before the immortal Bridegroom led the way
Where heaps of gay flowers burying half the feet
Lay breathing odours through the crowded street.
Careless of all beside, each Lady's eye
Must gaze on SIVA as the troop sweeps by:
One dark-eyed beauty will not stay to bind
Her long black tresses, floating unconfined,
Save by her little hand; her flowery crown
Hanging neglected and unfastened down.
One from her maiden tore her foot away
On which the dye, all wet and streaming, lay,
And o'er the chamber rushing in her haste,
Where'er she stepped, a crimson footprint traced.
Another at the window takes her stand;
One eye is dyed,— the pencil in her hand;
Here runs an eager maid, and running, holds
Loose and ungirt her flowing mantle's folds,
Whilst, as she strives to close the parting vest,
Its brightness gives new beauty to her breast.
Oh! What a sight! the crowded windows there
With eager faces! excellently fair,
Like honied lilies—for their dark eyes fling
Quick glances quivering like the wild bee's wing.

Onward in peerless glory SIVA passed,
Gay banners o'er his way their shadows cast —

Each palace dome, each pinnacle and height
Catching new lustre from his crest of light.
On swept the pageant,—on the God alone
The eager glances of the dames were thrown ;
On his bright form they fed the rapturous gaze,
And only turned to marvel and to praise :—
" Oh, well and wisely, such a Lord to gain
The Mountain-Maid endured the toil and pain ;
To be his slave were joy—but Oh, how blest
The wife—the loved one—lying on his breast !
Surely in vain, had not the Lord of Life
Matched this fond bridegroom and this loving wife,
Had been his wish to give the Worlds a mould
Of perfect beauty !—falsely have they told
How the young Flower-armed God was burnt by fire
At the red flash of SIVA's vengeful ire—
No,—jealous LOVE a fairer form confessed
And cast away his own, no more the loveliest.
How glorious is the Mountain King, how proud
Earth's stately pillar, girt about with cloud !
Now will he lift his lofty head more high
Knit close to SIVA by this holy tie."

Such words of praise from many a bright-eyed dame
On SIVA's ear with soothing witchery came :
Through the broad streets mid loud acclaim he rode,
And reached the palace where the King abode ;
As leaves the Sun a cloud at eventide,
There he descended from his monster's side.
Leaning on VISHNU's arm he passed the door
Where mighty BRAHMA entered in before :

Next INDRA came, and all the Host of Heaven,
The noble Saints and those great Sages seven;
Then led they SIVA to a royal seat,
Fair gifts they brought, for such a bridegroom meet:
With all due rites, the honey and the milk,
Rich gems were offered and two robes of silk.

At length by skilful Chamberlains arrayed
They led the lover to the royal Maid.
Thus doth the Moon disturb the tranquil rest
Of Ocean glittering with his foamy crest,
And leads him on, his proud waves swelling o'er,
To leap with kisses on the clasping shore.
He gazed on UMA;—from his lotus eyes
Flashed out the rapture of his proud surprise,
Then calm the current of his spirit lay
Like the world basking in an Autumn day.
They met; and true love's momentary shame
O'er the blest bridegroom and his darling came;
Eye looked to eye – but quivering as they met,
Scarce dared to trust the rapturous gazing yet.
In the God's hand the Priest has duly laid
The radiant fingers of the Mountain-Maid,
Bright, as if LOVE with his dear sprays of red
Had sought that refuge in his hour of dread;
From hand to hand the soft infection stole,
Till each confessed it in the inmost soul.
Fire fiilled his veins—with joy she trembled; such
The magic influence of that thrilling touch!

How grows their beauty, when two lovers stand
Eye fixt on eye—hand fondly linkt in hand!

Then how, unblamed, may mortal minstrel dare
To paint in words the beauty of that pair!

Around the fire in solemn rite they trod—
The lovely Lady and the glorious God;
Like Day and starry Midnight when they meet
In the broad plains at lofty MERU's feet.
Thrice at the bidding of the Priest they came
With swimming eyes around the holy flame;
Then at his word the Bride in order due
Into the blazing fire the parched grain threw,
And toward her face the scented smoke she drew,
While softly wreathing o'er her cheek it hung,
And round her ears in flower-like beauty clung.

As o'er the incense the sweet Lady stooped,
The ear of barley from her tresses drooped,
And rested on her cheek, beneath the eye
Still brightly beaming with the jetty dye.

"This flame be witness of your wedded life,—
Be just, thou Husband, and be true, thou Wife!"
Such was the priestly blessing on the Bride,—
Eagar she listened, as the Earth when dried
By parching Summer Suns drinks deeply in
The first soft droppings when the rains begin.

"Look, gentle UMA," cried her Lord, "afar
Seest thou the brightness of yon polar star?
Like that unchanging ray thy faith must shine!"
Sobbing, she whispered, "Yes, for ever thine!"

The rite is o'er—her joyful parents now
At BRAHMA's feet in duteous reverence bow:

Then to fair UMA spake the gracious Power
Who sits enthroned upon the Lotus flower :—
"O beautiful Lady, happy shalt thou be,
And hero children shall be born of thee!"
Then looked in silence,—vain the hope to bless
The Bridegroom, SIVA, with more happiness!

Then from the Altar, as prescribed of old,
They turned, and rested upon seats of gold :
And, as the Holy Books for men ordain,
Were sprinkled duly with the moistened grain.
High o'er their heads sweet Beauty's Queen displayed
Upon a stem of reed a cool green shade,
While the young Lotus-leaves of which 'twas made
Seemed as they glistened to the wondering view
All richly pearled with drops of beady dew.
In twofold language on each glorious head
The Queen of Speech her richest blessings shed ;
In strong, pure, godlike utterance for his ear,
To her in liquid tones, soft, beautifully clear.

Now for awhile they gaze where Maids divine
In graceful play the expressive dance entwine,
Whose eloquent motions, with an Actor's art,
Show to the life the passions of the heart.

The rite was ended ; then the Heavenly band
Prayed Siva, raising high the suppliant hand :—
"Now, for the dear sake of thy lovely Bride,
Have pity on the gentle God"—they cried—
"Whose tender body thy fierce wrath has slain :
Give all his honour, all his might again!"

Well pleased, he smiled,—the gracious answer gave,
SIVA himself now yields him KAMA's slave.—
When duly given, the Great will ne'er despise
The gentle pleading of the Good and Wise.

Now have they left the wedded Pair alone,
And Siva takes her hand within his own
To lead his darling to the bridal bower,
Decked with bright gold and all her sumptuous dower.
She blushes sweetly as her maidens there
Look with arch smiles and glances on the Pair,
And for one moment, while the damsels stay,
From him she loves turns her dear face away.

# Notes

## CANTO FIRST

The Hindu Deity of War, the leader of the celestial armies, is known by the names Kartikeya and Skanda ; he is represented with six faces and corresponding arms, and is mounted upon a peacock.

*Himalaya.*] Mansion of Snow ; from *hima*, snow, and *alaya*, mansion. The accent is on the *second* syllable.

*Prithu.*] It is said that in the reign of this fabulous Monarch, Gods, Saints, Demons, and other supernatural beings, drained or *milked* from the Earth various treasures, appointing severally one of their own class as the recipient, or *Calf*, to use the word of the legend. Himalaya was thus highly favoured by the sacred Mount Meru, and the other hills. The story is found in the sixth chapter of the *Harivansa*, which forms a supplement to the *Great Bharat.*

*Still the fair pearls, &c.*] It was at any rate the *poetical* belief of the Hindus that Elephants wore these precious jewels in their heads.

*Till Heavenly Minstrels, &c.*] A class of demi-gods, the Songsters of the Hindu Paradise, or Indra's Heaven.

*There magic herbs, &c.*] Frequent allusion is made by Kalidas and other Sanskrit poets to a phosphoric light emitted by plants at night. We are not unacquainted with this phenomenon even in our own climate.

*E'en the wild kine, &c.*] The *Chouri*, or long brush, used to whisk off insects and flies, was with the Hindus what the sceptre is with us. It was usually made of the tail-hairs of the *Yak*, or *Bos Grunniens* ; thus the poet represents these animals as doing honour to the Monarch of Mountains with these emblems of sovereignty.

*The Seven Great Saints.*] The Hindu name of the constellation *Ursa Major*. They will appear as actors in the course of the poem.

*And once when Indra's might.*] We learn from the *Ramayana* that the Mountains were originally furnished with wings, and that they flew through the air with the speed of the wind. For fear lest they should suddenly fall in their flight, Indra, King of the Gods, struck off their pinions with his thunderbolt; but Mainaka was preserved from a similar fate by the friendship of Ocean, to whom he fled for refuge.

*Born once again, &c.*] The reader will remember the Hindu belief in the Transmigration of Souls. The story alluded to by the poet is this:—"*Daksha* was the son of *Brahma* and father of *Sati*, whom, at the recommendation of the *Rishis*, or Sages, he espoused to *Siva*, but he was never wholly reconciled to the uncouth figure and practices of his son-in-law. Having undertaken to celebrate a solemn sacrifice, he invited all the Gods except *Siva*, which so incensed *Sati*, that she threw herself into the sacrificial fire."—(Wilson, Specimens of Hindu Theatre, Vol. II, p. 263). The name of *Sati*, meaning good, true, chaste woman, is the modern, *Suttee*, as it is pronounced and corruptly written.

*As the blue offspring of the Turquoise Hills.*] These hills are placed in Ceylon; the precious stone grows, it is said, at the sound of thunder in the rainy season.

*At her stern penance.*] This is described in the fifth canto. The meaning of the name Uma is "Oh, do not!"

*The Gods' bright River.*] The celestial Ganges, which falls from Heaven upon Himalaya's head, and continues its course on earth.

*Young Kama's arrow.*] Kama, the Hindu Cupid, is armed with a bow, the arrows of which are made of flowers.

*And brighter than Asoka's rich leaves.*] Nothing, we are told, can exceed the beauty of this plant when in full bloom. It is, of course, a general favourite with the poets of India.

*The strings of pearl.*]

"Then, too, the pearl from out its shell
Unsightly, in the sunless sea,
(As 'twere a spirit, forced to dwell
In form unlovely) *was set free*,
And round the neck of woman threw
*A light it lent and borrowed too.*"

Moore—*Loves of the Angels.*

Moore is frequently the best interpreter, unconsciously, of an Indian poet's thought. It is worth remarking, that the Sanskrit

word *mukta*, pearl (literally *freed*), signifies also the *spirit* released from mundane existence, and re-integrated with its divine original.

*The sweetest note the Koil ever poured.*] The *Kokila*, or *Koil*, the black or Indian Cuckoo, is the Bulbul or Nightingale of Hindustan. It is also the herald of Spring, like its European namesake, and the female bird is the special messenger of Love.

*When holy Narad.*] A divine Sage, son of Brahma.

*The holy Bull.*] The animal on which the God Siva rides, as Indra on the elephant.

*Who takes eight various forms.*] Siva is called Wearer of the Eight Forms, as being identical with the Five Elements, Mind, Individuality, and Crude Matter.

*Where the pale Moon on Siva's forehead.*] Siva's crest is the new Moon, which is sometimes described as forming a third eye in his forehead. We shall find frequent allusions to this in the course of the poem.

## CANTO SECOND.

*While impious Tarak.*] A Demon who, by a long course of austerities, had aquired power even over the Gods. This Hindu notion is familiar to most of us from Southey's "Curse of Kehama."

*Whose face turns every way.*] Brahma is represented with four faces, one towards each point of the compass.

*The mystic Three.*] "The triad of qualities," a philosophical term familiar to all the systems of Hindu speculation; they are thus *explained* in the *Tattwa Samasa*, a text-book of the Sankhya school:—"Now it is asked, What is the 'triad of qualities?' It is replied, The triad of qualities consists of 'Goodness,' 'Foulnes,' and 'Darkness.' By the 'triad of qualities' is meant the 'three qualities.' Goodness is endlessly diversified, accordingly as it is exemplified in calmness, lightness, complacency, attainment of wishes, kindliness, contentment, patience, joy, and the like; summarily, it consists of happiness. 'Foulness' is endlessly diversified, accordingly as it is exemplified in grief, distress, separation, excitement, anxiety, faultfinding, and the like; summarily, it consists of pain. 'Darkness' is endlessly diversified, accordingly as

it is exemplified in envelopment, ignorance, disgust, abjectness, heaviness, sloth, drowsiness, intoxication, and the like ; summarily, it consists of delusion."

*Thou, when a longing, &c.*] "Having divided his own substance, the mighty power became half male, half female, or *nature active and passive*".—Manu, Ch. I.

So also in the old Orphic hymn it is said,

............................... ........... . ... ..

"Zeus was a male ; Zeus became a deathless damsel." •

*The sacred Hymns.*] Contained in the Vedas, or Holy Scriptures of the Hindus.

*The Word of Praise.*] The mystic syllable OM, prefacing all the prayers and most of the writings of the Hindus. It implies the *Indian triad*, and expresses the *Three or One.*

*They hail thee, Nature.*] The object of Nature's activity, according to the Sankhya system, is "the final liberation of individual soul." "The incompetency of nature, an irrational principle, to institute a course of action for a definite purpose, and the unfitness of rational soul to regulate the acts of an agent whose character it imperfectly apprehends, constitute a principal argument with the theistical Sankhyas for the necessity of a Providence, to whom the ends of existence are known, and by whom Nature is guided......The atheistical Sankhyas, on the other hand, contend that there is no occasion for a guiding Providence, but that the activity of nature, for the purpose of accomplishing soul's object, is an intuitive necessity, as illustrated in the following passage :—As it is a function of milk, an unintelligent (substance), to nourish the calf, so it is the office of the chief principle (nature), to liberate the soul." Prof. Wilson's *Sankhya Karika.*

*Hail thee the Stranger Spirit, &c.*] "Soul is witness, solitary, bystander, spectator, passive."—*Sankh. Kar.* Verse XIX.

*See, Varun's noose.*] The God of Water.
*Weak is Kuvera's hand.*] The God of Wealth.
*Yama's sceptre.*] The God and Judge of the Dead.

*The Lords of Light.*] The Adityas, twelve in number, are forms of the Sun, and appear to represent him as distinct in each month of the year.

*The Rudras.*] A class of demi-gods, eleven in number, said to be nferior manifestations of Siva, who also bears this name.

*E'en as on Earth, &c.*] Thus the Commandment,—Thou shalt not kill, is abrogated by the injunction to kill cows for sacrifice.

*The heavenly Teacher.*] Vrihaspati, the son of Angiras.

*His own dear flower.*] The Lotus, on which Brahma is represented reclining.

*Their flashing jewels.*] According to the Hindu belief, serpents wear precious jewels in their heads.

*Chakra.*] A discus, or quoit, the weapon of Vishnu.

*As Water bears to me.*] "HE, having willed to produce various beings from his own divine substance, first with a thought created the waters, and placed in them a productive seed."—*Manu*, Ch. I.

*Mournful braids.*] As a sign of mourning, especially for the loss of their husbands, the Hindustani women collect their long hair into a braid, called in Sanskrit *veni.*

*The Mango twig*] We shall meet with several allusions to this tree as the favourite of Love and the darling of the Bees.

## CANTO THIRD.

*Who angers thee, &c*] To understand properly this speech of Kama, it is necessary to be acquainted with some of the Hindu notions regarding a future state "The highest kind of happiness is absorption into the divine essence, or the return of that portion of spirit which is combined with the attributes of humanity to its original source. This happiness, according to the philosopher, is to be obtained only by the most perfect abstraction from the world and freedom from passion, even while in a state of terrestrial existence... .... Besides this ultimate felicity, the Hindus have several minor degrees of happiness, amongst which is the enjoyment of Indra's Swarga, or, in fact, of a Muhammadan Paradise. The degree and duration of the pleasures of this paradise are proportioned to the merits of those admitted to it ; and they who have enjoyed this lofty region of Swarga, but whose virtue is exhausted, revisit the habitation of mortals"—Prof. Wilson's *Megha Duta.* Compare also "The Lord's Song"—*Specimens of Old Indian Poetry*, pp. 67, 68.

Indra, therefore, may be supposed to feel jealous whenever a human

being aspires to something higher than that heaven of which he is the Lord.

The "chain of birth" alluded to is of course the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, a belief which is not to be looked upon (says Prof. Wilson in the preface to his edition of the *Sankhya Karika*) as a mere popular superstition. It is the main principle of all Hindu metaphysics; it is the foundation of all Hindu philosophy. The great object of their philosophical research in every system, Brahminical or Buddhist, is the discovery of the means of putting a stop to further transmigration; the discontinuance of corporeal being; the liberation of soul from body.

*As on that Snake.*] Sesha, the Serpent King, is in the Hindu mythology the supporter of the earth, as, in one of the fictions of the Edda,—

> "That sea-snake, tremendous curled,
> Whose monstrous circle girds the world."

He is also the couch and canopy of the God Vishnu, or, as he is here called, Krishna,—that hero being one of his incarnations, and considered identical with the Deity himself.

*The threefold World.*] Earth, Heaven, and Hell.

*His fearful Reti.*] The wife of Kama, or Love.

*To where Kuvera, &c.*] The demi-god Kuvera was regent of the North.

*Nor waited for the Maiden's touch.*] Referring to the Hindu notion that the Asoka blossoms at the touch of a woman's foot. All poets believe this: Shelley says,—

> "I doubt not, the flowers of that garden sweet
> Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet."
>
> *Sensitive Plant.*

*Grouping the syllables.*] This comparison seems forced rather too far to suit a European taste. Kalidas is not satisfied with calling the Mango-spray the arrow of Love; he must tell us that its leaves are the feathers, and that the bees have marked it with the owner's name.

*That loveliest flower.*] The Karnikara.

*His flowery Tilaka.*] The name of a tree; it also means a mark made with coloured earths or unguents upon the forehead and between the eyebrows, either as an ornament or a sectarial distinction; the poet intends the word to convey both ideas at once here. In this passage is another comparison of the Mango-spray: it is

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called the *lip* of Love; its *rouge* is the blush of morning, and its darker beautifying powder the clustering bees. From the universal custom of dying the lips, the Sanskrit poets are constantly speaking of their "vermeil tints," &c., as will be sufficiently evident in the course of this work.

*The Hermit's servant.*] By name Nandi.

*His neck of brightly-beaming blue.*] An ancient legend tells us that after the Deluge the ocean was churned by Gods and Demons, in order to recover the Amrit and other treasures that had been lost in it:—

"Then loud and long a joyous sound
Rang through the startled sky,—
'Hail to the Amrit, lost and found!'
A thousand voices cry.
But from the wondrous churning steamed
A poison fierce and dread,
Burning like fire; where'er it streamed
Thick noisome mists were spread.
The wasting venom onwards went,
And filled the Worlds with fear,
Till Brahma to their misery bent
His gracious pitying ear;
And Siva those destroying streams
Drank up at Brahma's beck.
Still in thy throat the dark flood gleams,
God of the Azure neck!"

Specimens of Old Indian Poetry—*Churning of the Ocean.*

*Gates of sense.*] The eyes, ears, &c.

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## CANTO FOURTH.

*Late, dim, and joyless shall his rising be.*] The Moon, in Hindu mythology, is a male deity.

*This line of bees.*] Kama's bow is sometimes represented as strung in this extraordinary manner; at others, the string is said to be formed of fibres of the lotus.

*One foot's untinted.*] "Staining the soles of the feet with a red colour, derived from the Mehndee, the Lac, &c., is a favourite practice of the Hindu toilet."—Wilson.

## CANTO FIFTH.

*And worn with resting on her rosary.*] The Hindus use their rosaries much as we do, carrying them in their hands or on their wrists. As they turn them over, they repeat an inaudible prayer, or the name of the particular Deity they worship, as Vishnu or Siva. The *Rudraksha mala* (which we may suppose Uma to have used) is a string of the seeds or berries of the Eleocarpus, and specially dedicated to Siva. It should contain 108 berries or beads, each of which is fingered with the mental repetition of one of Siva's 108 appellations

*Not e'en her boy.*] Kartikeya, the God of War.

*Of those poor birds.*] The Chakravaki. "These birds are always observed to fly in pairs during the day, but are supposed to remain separate during the night."

*Friendship may soon in gentle bosoms dwell.*]

"Amor in cor gentil ratto s'apprende."

Dante.

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## CANTO SIXTH.

*The Heavenly Dame.*] Arundhati, wife, of one of the Seven Saints; she is considered the pattern of excellence, and is invoked at the marriage ceremony by the bridegroom.

*The Boar.*] An Avatar, or incarnation of Vishnu. In this form he preserved the world at the Deluge.

*That thirsty bird.*] The Chataka, supposed to drink nothing but rain-water.

*Proud Alaka.*] The capital of Kuvera, the God of Wealth.

*The bright Champac.*]

"The maid of India blest again to hold
In her broad lap the Champac's leaves of gold."

*Lalla Rukh.*

*Angiras.*] One of the Seven Saints; the father of Vrihaspati, the teacher of the gods

*Vast grew his body.*] Alluding to the Vamana, or Dwarf Avatar of Vishnu, wrought to restrain the pride of the Giant Bali, who had expelled the Gods from Heaven. In that form he presented himself before the Giant, and asked him for three paces of land to build a hut. Bali ridiculed and granted the request. The dwarf immediately grew to a prodigious size, so that he measured the earth with one pace, and the heavens with another.

*Sumeru.*] Another name of the sacred Mount Meru ; or rather the same word, with *su*, good, prefixed.

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## CANTO SEVENTH.

*Pura's conqueror.*] Pura, or Tripura, the name of a Demon destroyed by Siva.

*Kailasa's side.*] A mountain, the fabulous residence of Kuvera, and favourite haunt of Siva, placed by the Hindus among the Himalayas.

*Kali came behind.*] The name of one of the divine Matrons. The word also signifies in Sanskrit a row or succession of clouds, suggesting the comparison which follows.

*In twofold language.*] In Sanskrit and Prakrit. The latter is a softened modification of the former, to which it bears the same relation as Italian to Latin ; it is spoken by the female characters of the Hindu drama.

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